



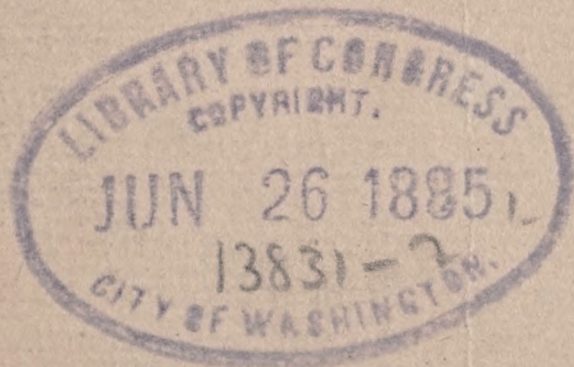


MARK MAYNARD'S WIFE.

BY

FRANKIE FALING KING.

"MARK MAYNARD'S WIFE," a new love romance from the pen of Frankie Faling King, is an exceptionally fine novel, possessing wonderful power, rare originality, and a degree of absorbing interest seldom attained. Marked vividness and naturalness characterize the entire narrative. The plot is simplicity itself, but nevertheless cannot be seen through, while every episode tells unmistakably. Thoroughly American, brilliant and dashing, the romance is also sensational without being too much so, and emotional without trenching upon the morbid or mawkish. The girl-wife Candice, her troubles, her flight from her careless husband, her thrilling experience and the clever stratagem by which she wins back her erring lord, all rivet attention in the firmest possible manner, while Uncle Sam's dry humor and the unswerving devotion of the Irish servant Katie are features that cannot be too warmly praised. Leon Tatro bursts into the romance like a gleam of lurid light, and Leta's sad story is very pathetically told. Candice's rescue from the waters and the attempted burglary will thrill all who read about them, and the doings of Baby Mark are charmingly set forth. In short, "MARK MAYNARD'S WIFE" will delight everybody, and should be read throughout the length and breadth of the land.



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“MARK MAYNARD’S WIFE.”

“Mark Maynard’s Wife,” by Frankie Faling King, is an American love romance of sterling merit and deep, absorbing interest. It is all action, and everything about it is new, unexpected, powerful and original. The plot is capitally constructed, giving rise to hosts of stirring and intensely dramatic incidents, while happy touches of humor here and there diversify the novel and relieve its emotional passages. The narrative is particularly graphic and as natural as life itself. Candice, the heroine, while very young, marries Mark Maynard. She is a poor relative of his, living with his stern, proud mother, who degrades her to the position of a servant. Mark is indolent and dreads making his marriage known to his mother, so Candice lives on unacknowledged and oppressed. Finally she believes her husband in love with Alda Lorne, an heiress, but a victim of consumption, and flees from him. All this is preliminary; then the main portion of the telling novel begins. The trials and troubles of the parted pair are thrillingly depicted, the reader being treated to scene after scene of pathos well calculated to awaken the keenest sympathy. But so numerous are the strong and fascinating features that it is impossible to do more than allude to them in the mass. The characters are exceedingly life-like, old Uncle Sam, Baby Mark and the warm-hearted Irish girl Katie being drawn with special felicity. The sub-plot dealing with Leta Maynard and Leon Tatro is sensational but strong. “Mark Maynard’s Wife” is a book for everybody to read, and that it will attain enviable popularity is certain.

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MARK MAYNARD'S WIFE.

A LOVE ROMANCE IN REAL LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

THE SECRET MARRIAGE AND REBELLION.

A LOVELY rustic scene: a fine, grand old orchard, laden heavily with fruit; the trees and even the grass beneath were covered with mellow, fragrant apples. The departing sunlight, glinting through the tree tops, made fitful, dancing shadows on the velvet verdure.

Little birds carolled merrily amid the branches; a timid hare started out from the waving grasses, lifting its head as if in quest

of the scent of danger, and then quietly nibbling away at the tender clover roots.

In the distance the cattle lowed, and the faint whinny of a horse, calling to its mate, was heard, while under one of the grand orchard trees, a century old at least, a young girl stood waiting. She was the fairest part of this quiet scene; motionless as a statue of marble she stood, gazing anxiously toward the ancient farm-house. One hand grasped a branch above her head, and her sleeve fell from an arm of delicately rounded proportions that would have been the envy of many a daughter of Eve less liberally endowed. A lovely, sensitive face, chubby and dimpled, and wondrous big brown eyes, dewy with unshed tears. Hair hanging in long curls of darkest auburn hue—a mass of riotous curls, unrestrained save by a single ribbon, tied carelessly behind. Her dress was only a faded calico, but neat and clean; it fitted the supple, willowy figure as perfectly as the finest dress created by Worth. But she was not happy; one could see that by the sad look

in the bonnie brown eyes, the pitiful curve of the ripe red lips, as she stood there waiting—waiting for what?

A whistle rang out, loud and clear; the whistler, with a single bound, came over the weather-stained rail fence that divided the meadow from the orchard lot—a handsome blonde young man, with a look of vexation on his attractive face at the sight of the motionless figure beneath the drooping apple tree boughs.

“Candice, what are you doing here?” He asked the question abruptly, almost angrily. “Can you not see that you are imprudent?”

“I did not think, Mark; but surely I have done nothing wrong; no one can say aught against me! I am your wedded wife! I have a right to meet you here!”

“Hush! Candice; do not talk so loud; some one might be passing and hear you! Of course, you have a right, child, but we must keep our secret yet a little longer.”

“I cannot, Mark! Oh! my darling, do not ask me, for I cannot!”

“What in the world ails you, Candice? Is the thought any worse than it was?”

“Yes, yes! a thousand times worse! Mark, will you not tell the home folks?”

“Candice, you must listen to reason! Do you want to ruin my prospects, child?”

“No, Mark, I do not wish to ruin your prospects; but oh! Father in Heaven! how much better it would have been if I had never come into your life!” There was such anguish and bitterness in her sweet young voice that her youthful husband gazed at her in wonder.

“Candice, are you sorry you married me?” he asked, softly, for this girl’s freaks were unaccountable to him.

“You know I am not, Mark,” she said, piteously; “but it is so hard to have others gaze at you with distrust, to have even your board and scanty covering given to you grudgingly! Your mother grudges me every mouthful I eat, and even this,” pointing to the faded calico, “while your sisters sneer at me whenever I speak to you or even mention your name. I overheard

Alice tell Aunt Kezia yesterday that 'Candice is fishing for Mark!' "

"You must not take such things to heart, Candice; women's tongues will clatter."

"I cannot help it, Mark! Sometimes I even feel as if I could hurl a bombshell into their midst by saying, 'I have a right here; I am Mark's wife!'"

"Candice," Mark said, anxiously, "you must control yourself. Why, child, you are actually getting nervous over it; this will never do, for 'tis but a slight thing to worry about after all! Uncle Sam and Alda will soon go; then I will explain it all to mother and the girls."

"And not until then?"

"No, not until then! Will you not kiss me, Candice?"

"Kiss you? No! no! Mark Maynard, at this moment I can almost find it in my heart to hate you!"

"Pleasant talk from one's wife!" he said, coolly. "All right, Candice; I won't ask you to kiss me again!"

Candice did not know what she retorted; bitter, angry words rose to her lips and found utterance. She was only a woman after all; she loved this handsome blonde giant with all her passionate, undisciplined heart, and could not forget that she was his wife.

"A sweet temper you've got, Candice! Why didn't you show it sooner?" Mark was laughing at her.

"I had no occasion, Mark Maynard; now, I have!"

"Well, cool off before I see you again, won't you? Remember you wouldn't kiss me, and so good-bye," and he sauntered idly away across the meadow, actually humming "Sweet Violets" in a rich, melodious voice.

Then the reaction came to Candice; down in the grass she sank, lower and lower, until her head was pillowed on her rounded arms, while great choking sobs burst from her. Mark, her husband, could leave her thus, and she was but four months a bride, with only promises for the future!

At last she rose wearily, wiped her tear-wet eyes, gathered some mellow apples from off the grass, and wandered homeward. Already dusky shadows were creeping about her and she would be missed; Aunt Kezia would be angry with her.

Mrs. Maynard's brother, Samuel Desbro, had arrived that morning, accompanied by his ward, Alda Lorne, a bright, sparkling brunette, and Candice, creeping softly through the hall on her way to her room, glanced carelessly in at the open parlor door. Alda was reclining on a low divan, and Mark, *her* Mark, was holding her hand it seemed to Candice tenderly, but in reality he was just in the act of examining a serpent ring that encircled one of Alda's taper fingers; the conversation had wandered to rings, and Alda was showing hers as a keepsake and a curiosity.

But Candice did not know this; like a wounded deer she fled to her own little room, with swerving, unsteady steps. Close down by the little window, the only one the chamber contained,

she sank wearily, looking out over the quiet landscape with dry, tearless eyes. The world had somehow gone wrong with her, and her girlish hopes and future happiness seemed likely to fall in shattered fragments at her feet.

CHAPTER II.

“A SERVANT; NOTHING MORE.”

“**C**ANDICE!” It was her Aunt Kezia, standing on the threshold and surveying her with an air of stern disapprobation.

“Yes, aunt,” and Candice rose instantly; “do you want me?”

“Yes, Candice. What an ungrateful girl you are. I’ve been running all over the house, trying to find you, and you are moping up here. What in the world ails you?”

“Nothing,” Candice said, quietly, hurt more than she cared to own by her aunt’s unkind words.

“Then, if that’s the case, and you are not sick, you could put your time in much more profitably helping Katie; she’s in one of her pouts again.”

“I will be down in one moment, aunt.”

“Hurry, then, for it’s tea time, and Katie s as mad as a March hare. I don’t know what to do with her.”

Candice followed her aunt’s elegant figure from the little room down the grand old stairway and went straight to the kitchen.

Katie looked up defiantly, as if expecting to see Mrs. Maynard, come to find fault as usual, but, instead, Candice said kindly:

“Katie, I have come to help you; tell me what to do, quick!” and she bared her rounded arms preparatory to active work.

Katie’s countenance cleared, like April’s sunshine breaking through storm clouds, at Candice’s cheery words and gentle voice.

“Miss Candice, you are always kind and good, and I’m so tired I’m fit to drop; what with all this work to do and the neurallajay in my head, I’m that put out I fale like setting meself down and letting the mistress storm or else come and do the work herself; shure, she’s always finding fault with poor Katie!”

“I’m so sorry for you, Katie! Does your poor head hurt you badly? If so, just tell me what to do and you sit here by the stove and keep your face warm; perhaps that will make it feel better.”

“Oh! no, Miss Candice; there’s naught but tooth pulling will do me any good.” Katie almost groaned with the pain. “Och! howly Moses! ’tis jumping it is like it would jump out of me poor head, and all this wurruk to do!”

“Never mind what’s to be done,” Candice said, soothingly, seeing that Katie was in real pain; “I can manage that,” and quietly and deftly she went to work; the tea was drawn, the table set, the roast turkey and boiled ham sliced to perfection and trimmed off artistically with celery leaves. Molds of wine-red jellies were emptied from their glasses into crystal dishes.

“Miss Candice!”

The girl looked up quickly from her occupation of bread cutting.

“What is it, Katie? Is your tooth worse?”

“No! no; but ’tis a shame the way you have

to slave ; all day long you've been sweeping and dusting, and now you are doing my wurruk, more shame to me for it to be groanin' and takin' on to you when you have your hands full already ! ”

“ That's all right, Katie. I'm only glad I can help you a little. And it's my duty, remember, Katie.”

“ Your duty ! Faith ! and what do you get in return, Miss Candice ? What little you ate and a few calico dresses, and, shure, you could arn dacint wages at any other place and work no harder than you do here.”

“ I know it,” Candice said, quietly.

“ I'm tired of it all, Miss Candice, and I'm goin' to lave ; there's wurruk enuff here for two Irish gurls like me, and the mistress expecting me to do it all, and company stuck up in the parlor in the bargain ! ”

“ Oh ! Katie, you do not mean it ! ” Candice said, anxiously. “ Think, Katie ; how would I manage without you ? I could never do all the work ! ”

“ I can't help it, Miss Candice ! I would do

anything in the wourld for you, but stay I can't much longer. She can get other help, or else let them lazy, good-for-nothing gurls of hers soil their dainty fingers; shure, it won't hurt them!”

Katie was clearly in one of her humors, and knowing that she would soon be ashamed of her ill-temper, Candice ran out in the old-fashioned garden and picked all the late fall flowers she could find and made them into bouquets for the table. This done, she stood off and surveyed the result; it was certainly all that could be desired, and with an air of satisfaction Candice again sought the Irish servant.

“Katie, everything is ready. What shall I do next?”

“Oh! Miss Candice, plase ring the bell, and then, if you would not mind pouring the tay, I will try and see about some of the other wurruk.”

“All right, Katie!” and catching up a white apron that hung over a chair back, Candice tied it jauntily about her waist and then rang the bell with a silvery peal, bringing the family and

guests from the parlor; they were soon seated about the well spread table.

Candice entered the dining-room quietly, with a cup of tea in each hand. She felt slightly embarrassed, for this was the first time she had met the new arrivals, having kept out of their way heretofore.

"Will you have tea?" she asked of each guest in turn, every moment expecting her aunt to introduce her, but no introduction came. She looked across at Mark; his eyes were bent on his plate as if not noticing her presence.

"Cold water, if you please," Alda Lorne was saying, in a rich, melodious voice. "I never drink tea."

Candice waited just one second longer for the introduction that did not come, then with head held haughtily erect hurried from the room.

"Quite a nice-looking servant!" Alda's voice came to her through the open door and, glancing back, Candice saw Mark look up quickly and then she distinctly saw Mrs. Maynard cast him a warning glance. That was all, and when Can-

dice re-entered the apartment her eyes were shining strangely, a crimson spot glowed on either cheek and her red-tressed head was still held haughtily erect.

“That will do, Candice.” It was her aunt’s cold, metallic voice. “I will ring when I need you.”

“Very well,” and Candice quietly withdrew. Ah ! her aunt was angry with her for waiting on the table in place of Katie, but it did not matter. Mrs. Maynard called her in just once more, and as soon as her task was completed sent her away.

Candice heard the click of spoons and glass-ware and the merry table chatter, but she was excluded from it all as much as poor Katie groaning in the kitchen over her neuralgia.

“Candice !”

Again her aunt was calling her, and she answered quietly enough. She was straining the milk into big stone jars out in the milk cellar. The family had all dispersed but her Aunt Kezia, and she had followed her here.

“What do you wish, aunt ?”

"Only this, Candice," and even this hard-hearted woman's face flushed uncomfortably under the girl's clear, searching gaze. "Katie is not feeling very well. I wish you would help her all you can while the company are here."

"Very well, aunt; is that all?"

"No; I wish you would not call me aunt in their presence; it will save all unnecessary explanations."

Now the girl's tones were cold and cuttingly polite. "You wish me then, Mrs. Maynard, to be a servant only, nothing more, during your visitors' stay?"

"Don't put it quite so plainly, Candice; it is only for a short time."

"Do the girls and Mark know?"

"Yes," the woman said, hesitating slightly; "they understand that you will masquerade for a time at least!"

Candice's heart beat wildly like that of an imprisoned bird; however, she made no sign but went on with quiet grace, arranging the milk jars and skimming off yesterday's cream

to be churned early in the morning. Her aunt stood and watched her for a few moments, then, seeing the girl did not notice her further, noiselessly quitted the cellar and joined the company; but her mind was ill at ease. Would Candice acquiesce, or must there be a scene?

In order that the reader may understand a little more of the story, a few explanations are necessary.

Candice was Mrs. Maynard's half-sister's child, the daughter of sweet Annie Desbro, who, marrying against her parents' wishes, had been an exile from home for years. Candice's father, a poor, struggling mechanic, had died when she was a baby. Poor Annie, left with an infant child on her hands, knew not which way to turn or what to do, and had struggled on and on, fighting poverty at each and every step, until Candice was fifteen years old; then her strength had failed her and she died, first writing a letter to her half-sister, Kezia, begging her to care for her child, little Candice Lee. Kezia had consented through selfish motives only. Some of the won-

dering neighbors called it an act of disinterested kindness and others prophesied a hard lot for the orphan, who was at length duly installed in the Maynard mansion as one of its inmates.

The family consisted of Mrs. Maynard, Candice's widowed aunt, the daughters, Alice and Leta, two haughty, indolent young ladies, and Mark, handsome, indolent Mark.

Mrs. Maynard had an only brother, Samuel Desbro, but he had been absent for over twenty years in India and the old countries, and now he had returned, accompanied by his ward, Alda Lorne. He did not even know of Candice's existence; he had asked after Annie, and Mrs. Maynard had told him she was dead, but never a word had she spoken of the child left behind.

Mrs. Maynard knew her brother Sam of old; if he found out that Candice, his half-sister's child, was living under the Maynard roof in almost the capacity of a menial, he would instantly take possession of her and provide for her out of his own abundant means. This would not suit Mrs. Maynard at all, for she did

not care to lose Candice altogether; besides, there would also be danger of Uncle Sam making her his heiress, and that would never do, for she had set her heart on Mark succeeding to his uncle's vast wealth. For these potent reasons she had doomed Candice to the kitchen during the visitors' stay.

CHAPTER III.

ONE MORE APPEAL.

VALLEY FARM was a lovely place; it was possessed of every modern improvement, and the latest was a tiny mock lake, which the girls had christened Lily Lake. It had been a pond before, but Mark becoming wild over fish-culture had had it dug out and enlarged until it looked indeed like a miniature lake; that was about two years ago, and he had sent to an Eastern Shaker village for minnows to people this artificial lake of his. Now these minnows had grown until they were almost two feet in length—great German carp. He had planted water lily roots, and at present the surface was dotted here and there with mammoth leaves and dancing water lilies. Mark enjoyed this fish-raising; every evening he took baskets of food

and went down the well-worn path to the little lake and fed his finny tribe. Candice, knowing this custom, determined to make one more appeal for protection from her aunt's last whim.

Candice had come to Valley Farm in the early spring-time, sweet and fair as the rose buds just bursting into life, and Mark, the handsome, indolent son of the house, commenced straightway making love to her. Mrs. Maynard, whenever she found her son at Candice's side, was angry; hence the poor girl was almost afraid to look at him, but already the mischief had been done. Treated with cool indifference by Leta and Alice, and with almost dislike by Mrs. Maynard, was it any wonder her heart turned to Mark as the only friend left on earth to her? He was kind to her, and she loved him in return. Mrs. Maynard, seeing how it would end, had forbidden Mark seeking the girl and he had sought Candice secretly, coaxing, begging and entreating her to marry him.

"Once we're married, Candice," he said, "mother can't help herself, and it will be all right."

Candice objected at first, but his passionate entreaties at length prevailed, and she consented with fear and trembling.

The family were invited to a social one evening and would be gone until a late hour. Mark pleaded a terrible headache and remained at home. "I'll go to bed early," he said to his mother, "and sleep it off," but what would she have thought half an hour later to see Mark, seemingly in the best of health and spirits, with Candice at his side, driving toward the nearest town?

It was about five miles away, and the distance was soon traversed. Stopping at the little parsonage, the young man hitched the smoking animal, blanketed it carefully, and with Candice on his arm entered the minister's presence. It seemed only a moment to Candice, and then she was again in the open air, with Mark's ring on her finger, his arm about her waist and the marriage certificate tightly clasped in her hand, which proved beyond a doubt that she was a wedded wife.

Now that it was all over they dreaded the issue and hurried rapidly back, almost expecting to find the family at home when they got there, but such was not the case, and they chatted of the future gayly enough until they heard Mrs. Maynard's voice in the hallway. Something had evidently gone wrong, and the glance of angry amazement she cast at Candice and Mark on entering the sitting-room made the girl shrink and cower with fear.

"So this is your headache, Mark!" cried she. "Go off to bed this minute! Candice, what an ungrateful girl you are to repay my kindness with underhanded work!"

Alice and Leta were looking at them scornfully; Candice rose tremblingly from her seat and quitted the room, Mrs. Maynard glaring after her angrily. The latter was in a passion; Mark saw that at a glance; when angry she was about as unreasonable a woman as the earth held, and if he should tell her now he dreaded the consequences.

Procrastination was Mark's greatest fault, and

he thought to put off this confession of his yet a little longer; in the morning, perhaps, his mother would be more reasonable; so with a yawn he raised his six feet of masculine length from off the chair and exclaimed:

“What’s the use, mother, of making a scene? Did it hurt anybody very much for me to talk to Candice a few minutes?”

His mother made some taunting remark, and with a scowl on his handsome face he quitted the apartment, slamming the door after him. Meanwhile, Candice in her little room, trembling with excitement, expected every instant to be called; she looked for angry words, tears and reproaches; but no summons came, and listening until the house was quiet, she disrobed and crept into her little bed, to lie there sleepless until morning dawned.

She dreaded the wrath that was sure to greet her if they knew, but no allusion was made to anything extraordinary, only her aunt was a shade cooler than usual, and the girls more haughtily unconscious of her presence than

ever. Mark looked strangely embarrassed. When Candice went to the spring for a pitcher of clear, cool water, he sauntered slowly after her, whistling softly to warn her of his approach so that she would not hasten back. The spring was under the brow of the hill, and his mother had not noticed his departure.

“Hang it all, Candice, I just feel like an infernal scoundrel!” he said. “Mother’s a perfect tartar! I’d rather be flogged than tell her! She’s got one of her spells now, and I expect she’ll send me to the right-about when she hears!”

“You did not tell her, Mark?”

“No, little one, I admit I didn’t have the spunk to face the music, and now I think it would be best to keep our secret until she gets better natured! Do you care, Candice?”

“Oh! no, Mark. You know best of course. A few days will not matter.”

But the days had lengthened into weeks and weeks into months and the secret was a secret

still. Now that Candice's fresh young beauty was all his own, Mark began to wonder if he had not been rather premature, and wished to put off the evil day as long as possible. But the girl's proud spirit chafed under the slights put upon her, and she had more than once begged Mark to tell the home folks; but now Uncle Sam and Alda Lorne had come, and he had positively refused to tell till they had gone; meanwhile she was expected to act as a menial—she, Mark Maynard's wife!

The work was all done and Candice, with weary feet and sadly beating heart, had seen Mark wandering toward Fairy Lake with a basket of food on his arm. She had toiled hard all day; her hands were burned and blistered cooking delicacies for the company, and now she was following her husband like some guilty thing through the gloaming.

Along the hedge the thorns wounded her tender flesh, but she must not risk detection; they must not see her follow Mark. On she went until almost out of breath she came to the little lake.

“Mark! my husband!” she cried.

He turned quickly, angrily, at the sound of her low, melodious voice and caught sight of her timid, shrinking figure.

“Why did you follow me?” he asked in a tone of annoyance.

“Because, Mark, my darling, I have come to plead with you once more! I cannot live on like this; my heart is breaking!”

“Nonsense, Candice! Don’t get into the tragic vein! I’m getting tired of this perpetual digging at me! It isn’t pleasant, to say the least of it!”

“Why did you marry me, Mark?”

“Because I was a fool!” he answered, harshly, and Candice, his sweet young wife, threw up her hands with a wail of anguish.

Mark was not bad at heart, only indolent and imperious. When he saw Candice with a look of stony despair on her face, he instantly relented. Putting one arm about her, he drew her to him, kissing her trembling lips and caressing her red-brown curls.

“Candice, I’m a brute! I didn’t mean it, child! Don’t take it so to heart; I was only vexed for the moment!”

Now her arms were around his neck, her burning eyes looking into his.

“Mark, Mark, I would want to die if you were sorry that I am your wife! Oh! heavens! I could not live if that were so!”

“But I am not, Candice, only I hate to be constantly tormented! I will make it all right as soon as mother’s company is gone. I cannot go to them now, Candice, and make a scene; you would not want to be so unpleasantly conspicuous either; and if mother sends us off, we don’t want it done before folks, do we, little wife?”

“No, Mark; but oh! how long are they going to stay?”

“Only a short time, Candice; Uncle Sam never remains long in a place.”

“Mark, your mother has forbidden me to even call her aunt before the visitors; did you know that? I am to be a servant while they are here. Look at my hands, already burned and blistered! Is this quite right, do you think?”

“Poor little hands!” Mark said, caressingly. “I will hunt mother up another girl. As for the rest, I suppose she has her reasons for not wishing you to be known. She told me Uncle Sam was very angry with your mother for marrying beneath her, and said he never wanted to see her or hers again. Mother is doubtless afraid he will be enraged at your presence here.”

“So that explains it all,” Candice thought; “but why didn’t she explain it to me? I would not have cared so much if I had known.”

“Jamie! Jamie! do you hear me calling through the gloaming,
Calling to you, darling, to come home?”

Loud and clear rang out the words of the song only a few rods distant. It was Alda singing with a voice clear as the morning lark’s, and the notes of Alice’s and Leta’s voices were plainly audible.

“The girls are coming, Candice! For mercy’s sake, run before they find you here!” Mark said, hurriedly.

Candice, nimble as a fawn, darted for the friendly hedge and waited breathlessly for their

appearance. On they came, laughing and chatting as only light-hearted girls can, close to the hedge where Candice was hidden, and she dare not stir for fear of attracting their attention. On they went in robes of white, fair visions of youth and beauty, and Candice, crouching in her faded calico, keenly felt the difference between them and herself.

"I am as fair as they," she thought, sadly, as she slowly and cautiously crept toward home, "but oh! how unutterably different my life is from that of the petted heiress, Alda Lorne!"

"Mahomet would not come to the mountain, so the mountain came to Mahomet!" Alda said, gayly, as they approached Mark.

"I was afraid you would be gone," Leta said, glancing at Mark suspiciously, he seemed so wonderfully busy just then, and he had been gone almost an hour from the house.

"Is it not quite a sight, Miss Lorne," Mark said, abruptly calling attention to the fish feeding, and pretending not to notice his sister's remark.

“Isn’t it wonderful?” Alda said, deeply interested, gazing at the water bubbling and splashing as the fish jumped for some particle of food and carried it beneath the surface. “This fish-raising is something new, isn’t it?”

“It is not common,” Mark answered, pleasantly; then he unmoored the little boat and invited the girls to take a sail over his mammoth lake. “The name of pond doesn’t suit the girls, Miss Lorne!” he said, laughingly, “and they have christened it Fairy Lake!”

“Quite appropriate, I’m sure,” Alda said, laughing at the girls’ quaint conceit. “Might we not as well have things poetical as so terribly matter-of-fact?”

“Certainly,” Mark said, bowing ironically; “you ladies are privileged creatures!”

CHAPTER IV.

"MY LOVE IS LIKE THE RED, RED ROSE!"

POOR CANDICE, creeping softly through the tangled grasses, tares and brushwood, thought bitterly of the scene she had left, and of her young husband talking soft, flattering nonsense to their beautiful young guest. She knew he would, for it was as natural for Mark Maynard to admire beautiful women and tell them of his admiration as it was to live!

Alda Lorne was as beautiful as some fabled houri; she was a bewitching, bewildering brunette, with large, languishing dark eyes, and hair of midnight darkness, but about her great spirituelle eyes was an expression as if happiness did not always dwell in her young heart; her face when in repose was unutterably sad; fair, dainty Alda, though so young, had yet the

insidious germ of a fatal disease lurking in her system! Her mother, a delicate Southern girl, had fallen a prey to deadly consumption, and Alda knew that in a few years she also was doomed to an early grave! Already she had a dry, hacking cough, and more than once her handkerchief had been stained crimson by slight hemorrhages. She had not informed her guardian of this, knowing it would grieve him greatly, for he loved his fair young ward, an orphan left to his care when she was quite an infant. Her father had taken his fair, youthful wife to India, thinking the change would be beneficial to her, but not so, and when he was stricken down in the full strength of his manhood with a fatal fever, his wife lived only a few weeks longer; they were buried side by side in the far away land.

Samuel Desbro had been a friend of the family, and the little Alda was entrusted to his care. Wealth illimitable was hers, but that could not prolong her life or take the lurking shadows from about her young heart. She knew she

had her mother's disease, but made no lament; night after night she lay with wide open, tearless eyes, wooing sleep in vain, or a storm of passionate sobs would shake her slender frame and her pillow would be drenched with tears.

Poor Alda! Candice in her gentle heart would have pitied her if she had known, but she did not, and sitting in her little room, with the last fading rays of the sun bathing her face, she watched from her window the young folks return to the house. She envied the fair young girl walking so proudly by Mark's side, and felt a sharp pang of jealousy for the beautiful stranger so warmly welcomed among them.

Days came and went, and still the guests lingered, Candice bravely doing her best with the work. Katie, after her neuralgia had disappeared, seemed ashamed of her bad temper, and once more took the burden from the young girl's shoulders. All passed quietly until one day Candice went to her room on some trifling errand. What was her surprise to find it already occupied; the bed was taken down and a small easel

stood at the window; on it was an unfinished sketch. Candice gazed about her in dismay. What did it all mean? Must even her little room be invaded, given over to the enemy? Was there no spot on earth she could call her own? Her errand was forgotten, and hurrying down to Katie, she said, bitterly:

“I guess aunt expects me to hang upon a nail, nights, Katie!”

“Why, Miss Candice?”

“She has taken possession of my room; the bed is disposed of, and an easel stands at the window!”

“Faith, Miss Candice, and is that what it is? Shure I toted the thing up meself. Your aunt says to me, ‘Katie, take this and carry it up to Candice’s room.’ Shure I thought it was a clothes-rack or something of the kind for your own especial use, and I thought the mistress was getting a kind spell on for a change, bad ’cess to her! What’s the thing for, Miss Candice, that you’re turned out for it? Shure there’s space for both the aisil and you, or must it be a hermit and have the room by itself!”

"Katie, you do not understand," Candice said, half laughing at her droll remarks. "They have turned my poor little room into a studio."

"A what?" Katie asked, innocently.

"A studio to paint in," Candice said, smiling at Katie's look of perplexity.

"Shure and is that the raisin they have turned you out of your room? Couldn't they paint in their own room just as well?"

"Oh! Katie," and Candice laughed merrily, "don't you understand yet?"

"Indade I don't!" and Katie shook her brick-colored hair in a negative fashion. "Faith, and me blundering Irish tongue is always getting things wrong!"

"Katie, Miss Lorne, I understand, is quite an artist and paints lovely pictures, and I heard them remarking at the table yesterday something about the girls taking lessons. Oh! if I could only paint and be loved and courted like Miss Lorne, courted, fêted and caressed!" and the girl's voice died to almost a wail.

“Don’t, Miss Candice! Shure Katie will stick to you. I’m only a pore Irish gurl, but I don’t forget kindness when I meet it. Shure you can slape in me bed; ’tis nate and clane.”

“But where will you sleep, Katie?”

“Shure there’s lots of blankets and quilts in me room. I can make me a bed on the floor.”

“No, you will not,” Candice said, decidedly. “You kind, good-hearted girl, do you think I would not sleep with you? If aunt does not furnish me with another bed, I will share yours with you.”

But Candice went around the rest of the day with a heavy heart. She expected her aunt would seek her out and make some arrangements for her; she did not, however, but seemed to shun that part of the house. Candice felt hurt more than she cared to admit. “If she had only spoken to me about it,” Candice thought, sadly, “before they took possession, I would not have minded it quite so much, but to ignore my very existence, that’s where the sting is.”

Candice waited for her aunt's appearance in vain, and too proud to even mention the occurrence to any member of the family, she sought her little room, gathered up her few belongings and transferred them to Katie's chamber over the kitchen. Mrs. Maynard saw her flitting through the hall, well satisfied that she had submitted so easily, for the haughty woman dreaded a scene, and even she felt uncomfortable over the injustice she had done her half-sister's child.

Candice cried herself to sleep that night. A horrible certainty was taking possession of her mind, an unutterable dread of the future and what it would bring to her—shame and disgrace unless Mark acknowledged her as his wife, and that possibility seemed further off than ever. She arose in the morning, heavy-eyed and unrefreshed. Kind-hearted Katie tried to induce her to keep her room for awhile, but she would not, and with this fresh burden laid upon her young life she arose wearily enough, but with one thought burning and searing her brain. She

would seek Mark and tell him all; then, if he did not acknowledge her, she would go away and die! Better to go out of his life entirely than live on like this!

She watched and waited for him, but no chance came until just before dinner, when she caught a glimpse of him sauntering down the garden walk. Throwing prudence to the winds, with no thought of anything but her own pitiable plight, she hurried after him.

Hark! he was not alone; he had stopped under the old arbor of grape vines, and was speaking in the low, melodious tones she loved so well. Peering through the friendly shelter of a bunch of lilac shrubs, she saw her young husband with a beautiful red rose in his hand, and before him, with a faint flush on her delicate face, was Alda Lorne.

“‘’Tis the Last Rose of Summer!’” Mark said, laughingly. “Will you accept it, Miss Alda?” As the girl’s white fingers closed about the green stem, Mark said, softly, teasingly: “‘My Love is Like the Red, Red

Rose!" and gazed with evident admiration at the fair girl's blushing face and then raised the little, trembling fingers to his moustached lips.

Candice waited to hear no more; she turned and fled wildly, blindly, toward the house. She could not ask him now; he loved fair Alda Lorne! Between the fair young heiress and Candice, the working girl, there was nothing in common!

And Mark, in the old garden, had no thought of disloyalty to his youthful wife, but her claims on him had been so slight he had not felt their pressure heretofore. He admired Alda and had kissed her hand; that was all, but to Candice it was everything!

CHAPTER V.

KATIE REBELS.

ABOUT a couple of weeks after the incidents recorded in the last chapter, Katie openly rebelled. Mrs. Maynard had been more tyrannical than ever. Everything in her eyes went wrong ; she scolded Katie and Candice without the slightest provocation. Candice said nothing in reply, but Katie — quick-tempered Katie — would not brook so much fault-finding.

Monday, Katie did the washing and in the evening sprinkled the clothes down for the next day's ironing ; in the morning she put the irons on the stove to heat while she was getting breakfast.

Breakfast was over, and clearing up Katie set the dishes on the little side-table and commenced ironing, when Mrs. Maynard appeared

with a face like a thunder-cloud, dark and threatening.

“Katie, I want you to wash those dishes at once!” she cried.

Katie looked up, saw her mistress’ ireful face, and let the half-finished garment drop from her fingers.

“You want me to stop ironing, mum?”

“Yes, and wash the dishes!” Mrs. Maynard said, in a more gracious tone, for she did not quite like the looks of Katie’s head set so defiantly on her shoulders.

“Very well, mum,” Katie responded, quietly, and, taking the dish-pan down from the wall, she got water from the reservoir and commenced washing the dishes.

Mrs. Maynard glanced uneasily at the garment on the ironing-board; it was one of Mark’s shirts, all ironed but the bosom. She glanced at the shirt and then at Katie, who was washing the dishes with the utmost unconcern, and spattering the water about in a terribly suggestive manner.

“Are you not afraid the bosom will get dry,

Katie?" Mrs. Maynard asked, trying to speak pleasantly.

"No, mum," Katie answered, briefly, and Mrs. Maynard, thinking it would be best to beat a retreat, quietly left the kitchen.

Candice was sick, really and truly sick; her head burned and throbbed, and her limbs seemed tottering beneath her. Katie had persuaded her to remain in bed for a few hours, and what was her surprise to see the servant come to her room and commence packing her trunk.

"I'm going away, Miss Candice! Indade I'll not stay here to be scolded for doing the right as well as the wrong! She scolds me for using too much wood, and when I want to use the irons while they are hot to save the wood she scolds me for that, and shure a pore Irish gurl can't suit the likes of her!"

"Katie, where will you go?" Candice asked, anxiously.

"To Chicago, Miss Candice; my brother, Pat Maguire, has a bit of a shop there, and he would be glad to have Katie tend it for him. Many's

the time he's said, 'Katie, you nade not be wurking out; come and live with me!'"

"Oh! Katie, how can I get along without you?" Candice said, sadly, seeing Katie was determined on going. "After you are gone, I'll have no friend on earth!"

"Don't say that, Miss Candice, jewel of me heart!" Katie exclaimed, earnestly. "Shure if you ever nade a friend, Katie will be one to you!"

Candice had her arms about Katie's neck now, and was sobbing bitterly.

"Oh! Katie! Katie! if I could go too! You know not how much I am in need of friends!"

"Hush! Miss Candice!" Katie said, sobbing softly, but trying to speak cheerfully through her tears. "When the burden gets too heavy for the back to carry, then come to Katie; she will wurruk for you, if nade be! Shure, Katie Maguire never forgets the ones that are kindest to her!"

Katie packed her trunk, quickly donned hat and shawl and hurried to the nearest railroad

station, about half a mile from there, and sent a boy back after her belongings. That was the first Mrs. Maynard knew of the occurrence. She had not been near the kitchen since morning, and supposed Katie was still there. What, therefore, was her dismay when the boy came, stating that Katie Maguire had sent him for her trunk!

“Where is Katie?” Mrs. Maynard asked, anxiously.

“At the station, ma’am,” the boy said, respectfully, “waiting for the Chicago train. She said I was to hurry back.”

“Wait here,” Mrs. Maynard said, quietly, and hurrying through the dining-room straight to the kitchen, she paused and looked about her. The dishes were washed and put away, but it was nearly dinner-time and no preparations had been made for the midday meal. In the middle of the room the ironing-board stood, held up by two chairs, and Mark’s shirt lay on it, with the bosom still unironed. The kitchen was uninhabited save by a large Maltese cat, purring in the

open door-way. Mrs. Maynard saw at a glance how matters were, and hurrying up the back stairs entered Katie's room. Candice lay on the bed, sobbing bitterly.

"Where is Katie?" Mrs. Maynard asked, quickly, eyeing the sobbing girl angrily. Candice sprang up nervously.

"She has gone, Mrs. Maynard!"

"Gone, Candice, and you moping up here!" her aunt said, harshly. "You must come down and help with the dinner work and not be idling away your time." She did not ask Candice the cause of her grief, but seemed to take it as a personal offense against her own dignity. Glancing at Katie's trunk sitting on the landing where the Irish girl had dragged it, she hurried down and sent the boy after it.

Candice, rising, dragged her weary limbs down to the kitchen and commenced making preparations for dinner. It was slow work, for her head throbbed and her lagging feet almost refused to do her will. She thought of kind-hearted Katie speeding on toward Chicago, and her eyes were dim with tears.

Alice Maynard, a tall, graceful blonde, was not wholly bad hearted, and when she came into the kitchen after a glass of water for Alda, she saw at a glance Candice was not able to be working there, and told her in a kinder tone than she had used for months that she would help her with the work. "I will be so glad, Alice!" Candice said, gratefully.

Alice's heart smote her more than once that morning as she watched Candice furtively. It was winter now, or nearly so, and only eight months before Candice had come to the old farmhouse, bright, bonnie Candice, the very embodiment of youth and health; now she was wan and spiritless; the wild rose bloom had disappeared; she looked sick, bodily and mentally, and Alice, calling her mother aside after dinner, said, decisively:

"Mother, Mark must hunt up another girl this very day, for Candice is sick and cannot do the work. We have been so busy with Uncle Sam and Alda that we have not noticed her lately."

"Most likely she has the sulks!" Mrs. May-

nard said, coldly. "But, of course, we must have another girl; you must not spend your time in the kitchen!"

So Mark was dispatched to hunt up another maid of all work, and came back after nightfall with a big, stolid German girl.

Mrs. Maynard did not mention to Mark that Candice was ill. She called it a fit of bad temper, but for several days the girl was unable to leave her room. Mark felt many a twinge of conscience whenever he thought of her. Ah! the confession he was to make seemed further off than ever; how could he explain before his Uncle Sam and Alda? It would be bad enough before his mother and the girls, but to note his Uncle Sam's glance of stern disapproval and to see sweet Alda Lorne's eyes shrink from him in aversion, that would be too much! No, no, he could not nerve himself for the ordeal! He had pondered over it, considered it often, whenever he caught a glimpse of Candice's sad, pale face, but each time some slight thing had deterred him, and he put it off yet a little longer.

Samuel Desbro, a jovial, kind-hearted old man, watched Mark and Alda and shook his head knowingly. What might not happen with two young folks of the opposite sex thrown so constantly together? Surely he was not blind; he could see Alda's face flush in Mark's presence and turn pale at his shortest absence, like a broken lily drooping on its stem.

After a time Mark noticed this also; not, however, with secret exultation, but with a saddened heart; not with a lover's fond anticipation, but with a guilty, startled glance, and when Uncle Sam announced his intention of returning to Chicago and opening the big town house he had recently purchased, Mark was glad and told himself so. He would make good his promise to Candice and tell his mother all!

But the best laid plans are not always carried out, and right in the midst of the preparations an unforeseen event occurred which kept them chained to the old farm house for all the winter months.

Leta was to accompany them and enjoy a

winter of gay city life. Alda was glad to have a girl of her own age with her, and the preparations went on gayly.

Alice suggested a fresh idea one day. "Let's give Alda a farewell party," she said persuasively to her mother, and Mrs. Maynard, who entertained fond hopes concerning fair Alda Lorne and Mark, consented.

"What shall it be, Alda?" the girls asked her, happy as young, pretty girls always are in the anticipation of an evening's dissipation. "Just a plain ball, or would a bal masqué be better?"

"Oh! a ball masqué by all means!" Alda said, eagerly, and the girls readily acquiesced. Invitations were sent out two weeks ahead so everybody would have plenty of time to prepare their costumes, and then the girls set joyously to work manufacturing their own. Old boxes were rummaged and antique dresses brought to light that Mrs. Maynard had worn in her girlhood.

Alda's trunks were searched and many an odd-

looking garment brought forth, relics from far-off India, and soon the costumes were completed amid girlish chatter and merry laughter.

Candice in her own little room, which had been vacated when cold weather set in by the young artist and her pupils, listened to the girlish chatter going on in the room below and formed a wild, foolish scheme of her own. She too would go to the ball, and as one of the maskers, mingle for once among the family and guests. She had heard laughing allusions made by the sisters about Mark and Alda, and with a determination born of despair resolved to see and judge for herself; if it were so, she would go out of their lives forever!

She had formed no definite plan concerning her own future; she only knew she could not live under the Maynard roof longer if it were true and Mark, her husband, loved fair Alda Lorne. She did not think that merely showing her certificate to the family would prove her right as Mark's wife, for not for one moment would she force her presence upon him if he had ceased to love her.

Poor, innocent child ! she thought to go out of his life entirely and leave no trace behind ; then he could wed the one he loved !

Her mother's mourning garments were folded carefully away. She brought them out and fitted them on herself. She would go as a widow, for if it were true and Mark loved Alda and regretted marrying her, was she not worse than widowed ? Better, far better, to lose your loved ones by death's cold embrace than to have them go from you in the full vigor of youth and fairness !

Yes, as a widow she would attend the ball, and as a widow would she go out in the world, if this cruel thing was indeed true, for then she could not, she dare not, remain longer !

CHAPTER VI.

SICKNESS AND THE MIDNIGHT FLIGHT.

THE night of the ball, so impatiently looked for, came at last. It was cold, bitterly cold; the wind whistled and blew down the chimneys of the old farm house until the fires leaped and spluttered, telling of an approaching storm. The old farm house was all aglow with light and warmth. Mrs. Maynard, regal in black velvet, waited unmasked to receive the guests. Carriage after carriage drove up the graveled walk and unloaded their freight of masked revelers.

All were welcomed gayly, and, after throwing off the wraps that enveloped them, entered the ball-room fitted up for the occasion, and mingled in startling contrast costumes of every kind and description. A fair young bride came creeping

softly in, and was it a strange fatality that a dark-visored, black-capped widow walked in her train, at first timid, hesitatingly, and then, as the novelty of the situation wore off, more regally erect.

Mark, conspicuous because of his height and curling blonde hair, made his way to the side of Alda Lorne; he knew her in a moment, the fair young bride. The straight, slender, graceful girl seemed very near to him that night; he forgot Candice in the ball's gay excitement, and when the young widow loitering near them attracted his attention he did not associate her with his wife, whom he supposed sound asleep in her own room.

To Alda Lorne no man in that room could compare with Mark. She watched him, a world of love in the depths of her dark eyes. She did not dance, as she had not felt very well for several days, and to-night a strange lassitude oppressed her; still she experienced no sadness. Was not Mark by her side constantly, attentive to her slightest wants? The gay revelry

went on, and at midnight they were to unmask. Candice knew this, and designed at the proper instant to creep quietly away. She was watching Mark and Alda with a singular, undecided feeling in her heart. Did he love fair Alda?

“Alda! oh! my God!” It was Mark’s voice, full of passionate sorrow, and in his arms like a broken lily lay Miss Lorne; her white bridal robes were stained and streaked with the crimson life-blood flowing from her lips! What did it all mean? Candice gazed with a great horror in her wine-brown eyes. Masks were thrown off amid the confusion, and all the dancers pressed eagerly about.

“Carry her to her room!” cried Mrs. Maynard.

Trembling with emotion and with a look of agony on his handsome face, Mark obeyed in silence, bore her through the hallway straight to her chamber, and Candice, creeping softly behind him, hoping to escape unobserved, saw him press his lips ardently to the marble cheeks. That was enough; undecided no longer as to

where his affection was placed, Candice entered her little room and locked the door; next she lighted her lamp and commenced making all her mother's dark dresses up in a bundle. She found the heavy crape veil and tied it tightly over a little black straw hat; then she took a small purse from out her trunk-till and counted its contents—thirteen dollars, that was all; not much for a young girl to think of facing the world with, alone and friendless! Mark had given her this money off and on to get trifles of wearing apparel, but fearing Mrs. Maynard would notice and wonder where she got the money, she had laid it quietly aside, and now it was to serve her in her wild flight.

Down the stairway she crept quietly, cautiously, pausing just one moment outside of Alda's room; muffled voices came to her ear, that was all, and almost holding her breath for fear they would hear her footsteps, she hurried safely by. Through the dining-room to the kitchen she went, and, unlatching the door, hurried out, closing it behind her. She

stopped then just one moment and listened furtively; the old Maltese cat purred contentedly at her feet; she took it up and pressed her young lips to its soft fur; then, as if afraid her heart would fail her, she rushed blindly, wildly out in the darkness.

Down the well-worn path which led by the fish-pond toward the station beyond she sped. The wind blew in her face, almost blinding her. It had rained two days previously, and the soil had been wet and muddy; now it had commenced freezing, and the ground was rough and uneven. It was so dark she could scarcely see her way; she approached too near the little lake, down sunk her feet in the soft mold, and one tiny rubber was left sticking in the loamy soil. In the darkness she could not recover it. Changing her course slightly so as to avoid the lake, she went on and on; in a short time she found herself at Valley Station, and, drawing her widow's veil about her to prevent recognition, she purchased a ticket for Chicago; it cost three dollars and twenty cents; well, she had enough left to

keep her for a few days at least, and, sinking on the hard wooden bench with her bundle beside her, she waited the train's arrival.

Why was she going to Chicago? She did not stop to ask herself that question; only Katie, warm-hearted, Irish Katie, was somewhere in that large city; she would go to her; she did not think, poor child, that it would be a worse task than hunting for a needle in a hay-stack to find Katie in that babel of noise and confusion!

The train came whizzing in; she took her seat in the car hastily and drew her veil more closely about her face; no one noticed the black-robed figure sitting so quietly in the corner; the conductor came along, took up her ticket and passed on, and Candice was left to her own bitter, burning thoughts. Somewhere on earth she would find some spot to hide herself, and perhaps she might die; she was young and strong, but then the young and strong die sometimes!

On, on went the train, screaming and puffing, and Candice, cowering down in her seat, thought of what she had left behind—her young husband

who did not love her, and her aunt who disliked her. "They will be glad I have gone," she thought, bitterly, "glad to be rid of the poor relation, and Mark can marry Alda!" Poor Alda! and even Candice felt a pang of sorrow for the bright, fair girl, lying so low in the old farm house.

In the room where Alda lay anxious watchers were by her side; a severe hemorrhage, the worst she had ever experienced, had left her wan and weak. Mark, hurrying toward the station in the darkness, had followed directly in his young wife's footsteps; he was in search of the doctor, for something must be done to stop the flow of blood that was sapping the young life of Alda Lorne. Little did he dream that Candice was hurrying from her rightful home out into the hard, cold world!

CHAPTER VII.

THE CONFESSION.

THE next morning dawned cold and cheerless at Valley Farm. Each member of the household gazed at the others with mute inquiry on their faces as to how this was going to end; would Alda's life be spared yet a little longer, or would it go out into the great unknown on the wings of death?

Ann, the stolid German girl, went around slowly but surely about her duties, and in the anxiety and commotion Candice was not missed for some time.

Uncle Sam, poor old man, was nearly heart-broken over Alda's sickness, for full well he knew that even though she might rise from that bed of sickness it would not be as the merry,

light-hearted girl he loved so well, but as an invalid respited for only a little longer.

Mrs. Maynard was the first to notice the absence of Candice, and asked Ann about her; but Ann knew nothing, and Mrs. Maynard, with a strange dread in her guilty soul, hurried up to the girl's room. What she expected to see was Candice too ill to rise, for she had noted the girl's marked listlessness for several days, and had attributed it to biliousness. Hence what was her surprise on entering the room to find the bed untouched; the calico dresses she had given her still hung upon the wall, but Candice was not there.

"Where can she be?" Mrs. Maynard thought, wonderingly, shivering until her teeth chattered. She had never before noticed how cold this chamber was in winter. "Candice must have a warmer room," she thought, softened considerably by the previous night's scene. "She must have risen early and made her bed, and is somewhere about the house at present," Mrs. Maynard thought, trying to

reassure herself; descending the stairs again she searched the house in vain, and then the barn and out-buildings.

It was noon now and still no trace of Candice was found. She was gone. The girls commenced asking about her, and Mrs. Maynard answered them evasively. Evening shadows once more closed about the old farm house, but still Candice did not make her appearance. When Mark took his place at the supper table he had not noticed her absence, or if he had he had given it no thought.

“Mark,” his mother said, sternly, “that ungrateful girl has surely gone—run away!”

“Has Ann gone?” Mark said, innocently. “It beats all such luck as we have with hired girls! I’ll have to hunt up another, I suppose.”

“You do not understand,” his mother said, quickly. “Ann has not gone.”

“Who in creation has then?” Mark asked, anxiously.

“Why Candice, of course!” Mrs. Maynard

answered, with the air of a highly injured party.

“Candice!” and Mark rose suddenly from his chair, his face pale with suppressed excitement. “Mother, you do not mean to tell me Candice is not here!”

Uncle Sam and the girls looked up in astonishment both at the news and the agony in his young voice.

“Can you not understand, Mark?” Mrs. Maynard said, glancing at her stalwart son, half anxiously. “Candice has gone. She ran off last night, for her bed was not slept in!”

“Oh! Father in Heaven!” Mark groaned, real agony in his face and in the tones of his full young voice. “Mother, this is our work; we have driven her from us; only you and I are to blame!”

“Don’t get excited!” his mother said, half angry at her son’s accusation. “What is it to you if Candice has gone? The ungrateful girl! we are well rid of her!”

“Mother,” and in Mark’s voice rang a tone of

determination, "if Candice is on this earth I must find her! No, do not try to stop me!" he said, impatiently pushing his mother to one side as he rose from the table and reached for his hat.

"My son, do eat your supper at least; you can search for her to-morrow."

"No," Mark answered, firmly; "I am going now. I shall not return until I find her!"

"You're making a terrible fuss about a servant-girl!" old Mr. Desbro said, with a merry twinkle of the eyes. "If she was old and homely, Mark—"

But the sentence was never completed, for Mark, towering above him like a young giant, cried, wildly:

"Hush, uncle! You do not understand. Candice is no servant-girl! She is your niece, your sister Annie's orphan child, and, more shame to my manhood for not telling it months ago, my lawful, wedded wife!"

"Mark! is this true?" It was his mother's voice, wild and entreating. Do not tell me that Candice is your wife!"

“Don’t talk to me, mother!” and Mark’s face seemed to have aged at least ten years. “I am wasting valuable time. My poor darling wandering out and alone such a night as this! I must go in search of her!”

“You can do nothing to-night.” It was his uncle’s voice, cold and stern, but Mark had gone out in the wind and darkness to hunt for traces of the half-maddened girl. He thought he understood it all now. Poor sensitive child, she imagined he did not intend to acknowledge her, and she had gone from out his life, thinking to leave him free and unfettered.

Mrs. Maynard, gazing after Mark in despair, was recalled very forcibly to the present by words of cutting scorn issuing from Samuel Desbro’s lips.

“Kezia, can it possibly be that a sister of mine has been guilty of an action that the lowest, most ignorant woman in the world would think twice before perpetrating? I ask you, and expect you to answer truthfully, is this young girl you call Candice sister Annie’s child?”

With a shame-faced look, Mrs. Maynard answered: "Yes!"

"And you have treated her as a servant, let her live in solitude, isolated from her cousins! Girls, are you not ashamed of yourselves for allowing this with your own cousin!" But Leta and Alice had disappeared, frightened at the turn affairs had taken. It was all right when it was not known, but now that the man they had thought to keep it from had found it out, they began to realize the littleness of their own conduct, and if Candice were only to return now they would welcome her with at least a show of cordiality.

Alda was very ill; whether she would be spared days, months or years was yet to be seen, but only by the utmost care could they hope to bring her through this attack. Uncle Sam thought of her with an inward groan. She loved this faithless Mark, and if she should hear of his marriage he knew not what might be the consequences, so he told his sister on no account to let Alda know. "We must keep it from my

pure white lily," he said, brokenly, "and as soon as she is strong enough I will take her away from here."

The matter was, therefore, kept a profound secret. Days rolled by; Mark had sought far and wide but in vain, and at last had given up the search as useless. Next he advertised in all the leading papers in several different cities, but with the same barren result. Candice had vanished as completely as though she had never existed.

A month later Mark was wandering down by the little lake and found the tiny rubber frozen in the mud; he recognized it at once as one of a pair that Candice had worn, recognized it with a great horror widening his sad young eyes. Could she have drowned herself? He could not rest until he had dragged the lake; the winter so far had been an open one, and the little sheet of water was not yet frozen over, so he had no difficulty in executing the work. No cold, dead face, with curls of red gold hair, however, met his view. Candice was not there.

CHAPTER VIII.

FLITTINGS.

ALDA recovered slowly, but not a word, not a hint did she hear about the distressing event that had occurred at Valley Farm. She noticed the sober faces of the family, but attributed everything to their anxiety on her account, and in her gentle heart was grateful. She convalesced slowly. Uncle Sam petted her continually. "You are so good to me, guardie," she said, gratefully, and could not think what made the tears start to his kind old eyes.

For Mark, Uncle Sam felt almost contempt. How could he marry his young cousin, and, having wedded her, be such a slave to procrastination as he had been? Uncle Sam could not understand it, even though Mark had come to him and bravely acknowledged everything, not

sparing himself in the least. He could understand one thing—Mark had dreaded to tell his mother, but that was all.

Mrs. Maynard's haughty spirit seemed broken, and she blamed herself for all that had occurred. She had repelled her son's confidence from infancy, chiding him harshly for any wrong-doing until he had commenced keeping his boyish secrets through fear of his mother's wrath. Candice, from the day she entered the farmhouse door, had been snubbed, almost ill-treated, and she was Mark's wife! She had ruined his young life, but the keenest regret availed nothing; this cruel thing was done and past recall.

Mark was as kind and attentive to Alda as ever. Mr. Desbro told him frankly just how the case stood. "She loves you, Mark," Uncle Sam said, pleadingly; "do not let her know her girlish romance is but dead sea fruit!" and Mark had promised.

It was Mark's strong arms that bore her from the easy-chair to the bed or placed her among

soft pillows on the sitting-room lounge. It was Mark who read to her by the hour those cold winter evenings. Alda wondered at his subdued air; the rollicking, merry Mark of a few short weeks ago was no more, but in his place was a courteous, sad-eyed young man who humored her slightest wish.

The name of Candice never passed Mark's lips, but he would sit by his bedroom fire after the rest had retired, far into the "wee sma" hours of the night, thinking, thinking. Spring-time came with its buds and bloom, "April showers and May flowers;" Alda was pronounced well enough to be moved, and Uncle Sam was busy making preparations for their departure.

There was no ball this time, from which each guest crept away in affright, but a calm, quiet leave-taking.

Mrs. Maynard was not sorry they were going, but could not bear to meet her brother's reproachful gaze. Leta was to go with them as companion for Alda until Mr. Desbro could engage the services of some entertaining per-

son as companion for her in her somewhat isolated life.

The important day at last arrived. Alda, a trifle paler than when she came to Valley Farm, yet wonderfully improved, shed tears of sorrow at parting with those who had been so kind to her, and made each member of the family promise to come to the city at their earliest convenience. Mark drove them to the depot, and shook hands with them warmly at parting.

“Will you not come to see us soon?” Alda said, raising her flower-like face to his, anxiously.

“Very soon, Alda,” Mark said, trying to speak gayly, but it was a miserable failure when he thought of the two fair women who loved him equally well.

“Be a man, Mark,” his uncle said, as they were going away. “It will do no good to throw away your life in useless repinings. Cast aside your indolence; active work will do you good.” And Mark promised to follow his uncle’s advice.

At the farm house the days passed drearily. Mrs. Maynard was less tyrannical and kinder to

her help, and Alice was like some lost spirit strayed from spirit-land. She had spoken the name of Candice several times, but Mark had checked her coldly. He was busy from morn to dewy eve superintending the spring work ; never once did he shirk from his duties as heretofore. Every time he came to the house he looked around, half expecting to see Candice gazing at him reproachfully as she used to do. His fish pond or " Fairy Lake " was drained and fresh water caught from the clouds. Whenever he wandered down the well-worn path, he could see in imagination the face of his fair young wife pleading to him for her rights.

Where was she, this lovely spring, living or dead ? He asked himself this question time and again, but could not answer it. How different it would be if she were back, his fair young wife ! He would love her, ah ! so tenderly ! At night in his dreams he would stretch out his empty arms imploringly for the lost bride who never came to them.

Surely, he was severely punished for his

selfishness and indolence! Like many other wrong-doers, if he could have lived his life over again, how different would have been his conduct!

He had imagined himself in love with Alda for a time, and in his boyish recklessness had been guilty of many an imprudence; now he knew his love for Alda was but calm brotherly feeling and admiration for her as a lovely woman. But alas! for fair Alda Lorne! love and marriage were not for her!

Alice Maynard, a lively little lady, and, like Mark, easily swayed, regretted her share in the whole transaction. If anything, she was kinder-hearted than Leta, and thought sadly of what Mark's tender, sensitive young wife had endured alone. All this pity and regret came too late to benefit the girl who had gone out from under their roof, her young affections repulsed and a terrible secret torturing her poor brain, for, alas! they did not know the worst.

Mrs. Maynard was disappointed, terribly disappointed in Mark, but she had only herself to

blame. When he informed her how near he had come to telling her of his marriage with Candice on the night of the social, but was checked, repulsed by her cold words and insulting looks, she had nothing to say in extenuation, and accepted as her just punishment her son's bitter, reproachful words.

Mark was changed. Nervous and restless, he could not content himself long at any particular thing; fish-raising had lost its attractions for him, so he turned it over to the hired man, and after the crops were well in and he had but little active work to fill his hands and occupy his mind, he appeared more restless than ever, and would saddle his gray horse, ride off by himself, be gone all day and come back when the evening shadows enveloped him, sad and listless.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RUNAWAY WIFE.

CANDICE, as she rode through the cold and darkness thought only of her young husband, and sobbed behind her widow's veil until the fountains of her tears were dried. When morning dawned, cheerless and gray, with feathery snowflakes falling rapidly, she gazed out on the "Queen City" they were just entering with dry, feverish eyes.

Here was her destination; here she must alight, and then what would become of her? She did not stop to think, but, gathering her shawl more closely about her and grasping her little bundle tightly in her hand, descended to the platform.

She threw her veil aside that the cool air might fan her feverish cheeks, and the depot

officials and waiting passengers gazed in wonder at the face before them. The brown eyes were wild and anguished, her pale visage shone forth white and colorless as any fine-cut cameo, and her long auburn curls were tossed and tumbled by the wind.

Many kind-hearted women looked after her with tears in their eyes as she passed by. "Poor thing!" they murmured, softly; "so young to be a widow!"

A crowd of busy hackmen swarmed about her, confusing her by their rapid utterances.

"Hack, Miss? Step right this way!" One brawny fellow opened the door of his vehicle as if to induce her to enter.

"No! no!" She wanted no hack; she must walk, for she knew well the value of money and had but little to spare. Hurrying on to escape their importunities she found herself on one of the crowded thoroughfares. As she realized she had nothing in common with this throng of laughing, gayly-dressed women, she hastened up the first side street to which she came, think-

ing to escape from the gaze of so many wondering eyes. She passed along the boulevards and her brown eyes widened with awe as she looked upon the magnificent dwellings before her. Rude men passed her and stared at her openly, but, too innocent to notice them, she wandered on and on.

“Katie, I must find Katie,” was her constant thought, and once or twice she accosted passers-by, asking if they could tell her aught of Katie Maguire, but they laughed in her face or answered pityingly, thinking she was crazed and knew not what she asked. One young man turned and followed her, wishing to attract her attention, but she was blind to his presence, and at last he turned away discouraged.

She was hungry and weary and stopped at a little bake-shop to buy a few cakes, asking permission to rest while she ate them; then, again she hurried away. On, on she went, but Katie's cheery face did not greet her view, and considering how worse than useless it was to search for

her, Candice, worn-out and heartsick, entered the first respectable-looking boarding house she came to, just as the evening shadows were falling over the noisy, bustling city. The landlady glanced at her suspiciously, but was touched by the look of sorrow on the fair young face and kindly made room for her among her already numerous boarders. A tiny apartment was given her, poor and mean, but Candice was not used to better and accepted it gratefully; the room was heated by a drum fed from the base burner beneath, and the pleasant warmth was very acceptable to the cold, shivering girl. Throwing herself on the bed, Candice closed her weary eyes. An hour or more she lay there utterly exhausted, without a flutter of the eyelids or a motion of the toil-worn though shapely hands, folded so tightly over her heart.

Mrs. Harris, more troubled than she cared to admit over her new boarder's appearance, stole noiselessly up to her room and knocked softly, but receiving no answer opened the door and entered. She noticed the girl's position and was

about to withdraw as quickly as possible, when the eyes of the sleeper opened and gazed wonderingly about her. Noticing the waiting landlady regarding her curiously, she struggled to her feet.

"I was so weary, Madam," she said, in apology; "the warmth after being out in the cold made me sleepy, and I did not hear you enter."

"Can I do anything for you?" Mrs. Harris said, kindly; "you look utterly fatigued."

"No, thanks," Candice said, gratefully; "I am quite comfortable and you are very kind."

"My dear," Mrs. Harris said in reply, "will you tell me your name? You are very young to be a widow, and yet you are dressed in a widow's garb."

"My name?" Candice said, wearily. "Ah! yes, I had forgotten I had not already told you. My name is Mrs. Mayne."

"I am not mistaken and you are a widow then, poor child?"

"Yes! yes!" Candice moaned, plaintively. "I am widowed. Mark! oh! my husband!"

The rounded arms were thrown up wildly and the wine-brown eyes were dry and tearless.

"Poor child! poor dear!" Mrs. Harris said, tears moistening her own eyes, and she did the greatest kindness she could have done to the friendless girl; she went straight up to the fair young stranger with the passionate, anguished face, and drawing her head covered with a mass of red-gold hair down on her motherly shoulder, talked in kind, sympathetic tones until the little hands unclenched their passionate grip and the hard, tense look left the girlish face and she was sobbing freely. The kind-hearted woman then went down to the kitchen below and with her own hands brewed a cup of strong tea, and with some warm muffins and rich preserves again sought the girl's room and pressed her to eat.

The first morsel nearly choked her, but after having drunk the tea and eaten a few mouthfuls, she felt better, and the kind woman left her, after tucking her warmly in bed and imprinting a motherly kiss on her brow. Mrs. Harris did not realize the full extent of the kindness

she had done ; poor Candice was on the verge of madness, and the kind, motherly treatment, so unlooked for, had started the tears once more, and eased the throbbing brain.

Would there were more women like Mrs. Harris ; many a poor girl would be saved if this were so ; kind words in pity spoken will melt the heart, but bitter ones will drive the erring on, further and further in the downward course.

CHAPTER X.

"SO NEAR AND YET SO FAR."

ALDA and Leta, sitting at the window of a handsome brown-stone residence, in the last month of spring-time, were discussing Leta's return home in a few weeks at furthest.

"What will I do without you, Leta?" Alda said, sorrowfully. "I will be very lonesome without you!"

"You can get some one to fill my place, dear Alda, very easily. An advertisement will bring hundreds out of employment to you; surely you can pick from among them some one who will suit you."

"It will not be you, dear," Alda said, drearily, "and I cannot bear to think of a stranger being with me constantly." Then there was a slight pause in the conversation, broken at last by

Alda's voice, low and tremulous: “Leta, do you not think it strange your brother has never been to see us since we came here?”

“He is so busy,” Leta said, quietly, noting with saddened heart how the fair face flushed and paled, for strange as it may seem not one hint of Mark's marriage and his young bride's flight had reached Alda's ears. Isolated almost entirely from society she had not met any person who was familiar with the strange, romantic tale. But she knew that for only a few months at most could she stay among those who had been so kind to her, and she longed with an unutterable longing to gaze upon the face of Mark Maynard once more; to feel his strong hands clasp hers would seem almost as if he could hold her back from death's cold embrace! As has been said, she knew she had not long to live. She had talked it all over with Leta, calmly and quietly, as behooved one resigned to the dread thought. She had divided her girlish possessions between Leta and Alice; her vast wealth she never mentioned, but stored away in

her mind was a plan which was destined to reach fruition ere many months rolled by.

Uncle Sam watched Alda with a great pain gnawing at his very heart strings; he was alone in the world, having never married, and on Alda he had bestowed all the affection he would have given to a child of his own, if he had been blessed with wife and family. It grieved him to see Alda each day growing thinner and more shadowy; it grieved him to think that young life so full of grand possibilities must go out when just on the threshold of perfect womanhood; to lose his pet, his gleam of sunshine, was almost more than he could contemplate now in the autumn of his existence.

Alda and Leta, sitting by the parlor window, gazing out at the passing throng, saw a ruddy-haired, buxom Irish girl sauntering slowly by. Leta leaned eagerly forward and said to Alda, half laughingly: "I believe that was Katie Maguire, our fiery Irish help of last summer; yes, I am sure," she added, decisively, as Katie turned her head in that direction.

“The one that left so suddenly?” Alda said, smiling. “Your mother was terribly put out that morning; I remember it well.”

And Katie, sauntering slowly by the elegant house, had not the faintest idea that Mrs. Maynard’s daughter Leta was gazing out at her from the parlor window. Katie’s mind was filled with other thoughts just then, and she did not notice the girl’s familiar face pressed so closely against the window panes.

Candice, in the boarding house where we last saw her, was more than grateful for the kindness Mrs. Harris showed her; but several days passed; her little stock of money was nearly gone, and she had no way to obtain more. Day after day she wandered out on the streets in search of Katie, but she could find no trace of her, and at last gave up in despair. A week elapsed and then two, and her last dollar was expended. What should she do? She was conscious of only one thought—she could not accept this shelter longer. Mrs. Harris had been very kind to her, but she could not forget she had no claim upon her and that she was poor also.

So once more poor Candice found herself out on the sidewalks of Chicago, friendless and without money. She wandered all day through the streets and along the boulevards, and at nightfall found herself in a strange part of the city; the buildings of brick and granite were replaced by humble cottages, and tiny shops were scattered about instead of the mammoth stores.

Hark! What was that noise, thundering, roaring in her ears like imprisoned waters striving to burst their boundaries?

On, on she wandered; now her feet were not upon the hard pavements, but treading soft, yielding sand, and the waves of the lake, leaping and splashing, broke on her astonished sight. Then a wicked thought surged through her brain; her breath came short and pantingly as what she contemplated came to her in its horrible possibilities. Why not get rid of it all, the pain and heartache, bury the present and past under the cold, cold waves?

What was that stretching far out almost

beyond her sight? 'Twas the pier where they loaded and unloaded vessels. She would go out on that a little way. She would not drown herself—no! no! only walk out over the waves and watch them splashing against the abutments beneath her! She was young and strong; it would be so hard to die!

No one noticed the fair young girl in widow's weeds wandering out on the pier among the tiers of cordwood. She went on and further on; beneath her lay the cruel, treacherous waves. One leap and all would be over; the waters would encircle her and the floating drift wood would float on the same as ever! But no; an icy hand seemed to reach out and save her from herself, and turning with a weary sigh she hurried toward the shore. It was so far, so very far; she was faint and weary; she could scarcely see her way, and just at the water's edge her poor feet, benumbed with cold, stumbled and she fell into the leaping waves. A faint cry struggled from her lips, a terrified, agonized cry; a brawny laborer heard it and

saw with dismay the woman's form sink from sight.

For just one second's space he stood as if paralyzed; then, hurrying toward the spot, he waited for her reappearance. She was borne on the crest of an incoming wave almost to his feet; another minute and she would be washed out again never to return. With one leap he stretched out his toil-worn hands and clutched her dress. The water was receding. Would he lose her again? No! no! and clutching her garments with a firmer clasp he drew her from the waves and laid her tenderly on the beach.

"A suicide!" So thought this timely rescuer, and snatching up the lighted lantern he had dropped, he held it above the girl's face, scanning it curiously.

It was by mere chance this man was on the beach; his cottage was only a few rods distant, and he had come in search of driftwood for fuel; but now he forget everything save the young girl lying unconscious beneath his gaze.

She was no ordinary suicide he felt sure; that

dainty, high-bred face, refined even in its rigidity, was not the face of a common unfortunate, but of a lady whom cruel adversity had driven to this step!

Hark! Some one was coming. The moon just bursting through a cloud revealed two men in the police uniform, their brass buttons and stars glistening in the silvery light. They must not find this fair young girl; she might be dead and they would send her to the morgue, or, worse still, if living, to the police station as a suspicious character; she did not belong there, and, gathering her up in his strong arms, he carried her rapidly toward his little home.

She breathed! Ah! yes, he was sure of that! Opening the door he entered the tiny cottage; two women looked up on his sudden entrance, screamed slightly and then grew pale as they saw the strange burden he carried. It was no armful of driftwood to be laid in the oven and dried, but a fair girl with curls of red-gold hair streaming over his shoulder!

One of the women, red-haired and ruddy-faced,

started forward impulsively and fixed the bed for him to lay her on; then the wine-brown eyes fluttered and flew open wildly and the pale lips murmured: "Katie! Katie!"

The ruddy-faced young woman peered into the stranger's countenance anxiously. What did she mean by calling "Katie! Katie!" Surely she did not know her!

Again the young voice rose in delirium:

"Katie! save me! save me!"

Katie Maguire, for it was she, caught the small hands in hers and, in a wondering, awe-struck tone, said:

"Be aisy, Miss Candice, darlint! Katie will save you, shure!"

How came this fair young girl here, lying so low, for now she was certain it was Miss Candice of Valley Farm! "Can it be," Katie thought, wonderingly, "that she is in need of friends and has come to poor Irish Katie? Shure, 'tis cruel treatment has drove her to this!"

"You know her, Katie?" It was her brother's voice, bringing her back to the present.

“Know her!” Katie answered, quickly. “Shure I know the poor lamb so well I would do aught in the wide world for her! It’s Mistress Maynard’s own niece, more shame to her to drive the child to this! Dear Miss Candice, do you know Katie?”

The brown eyes rested for one moment on the girl’s ruddy face as if in recognition, and the pale lips murmured:

“Katie! kind, good Katie! I have hunted for you so long!”

But the girl was delirious; Pat was excluded from the room and Candice’s wet garments were changed for warm dry ones from Katie’s slender wardrobe.

Mrs. Maguire looked anxiously at Katie as they disrobed her, but Katie, resolved to shield Candice at any cost, met her sister-in-law’s gaze defiantly.

“’Tis all right!” she said, as if resenting the slightest intimation of wrong. “Shure the poor thing’s husband is dead and she be nearly crazed! Mayhap she will die if she

don't get cared for quickly!" and so the really kind-hearted sister-in-law asked no further questions; Pat was dispatched immediately for a doctor and before morning the feeble wail of an infant was heard in that humble cottage, and Mark Maynard had an heir.

But the mother's life was despaired of; she raved in her delirium of Mark and called on Katie piteously to save her from the cruel waves! The kind-hearted Irish girl kept by her side constantly, assuring her in tender tones that she would save her.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BURDEN OF LIFE.

FOR several weeks Candice lay fighting the battle of life. Katie excluded the rest of the family from the room entirely, for not for worlds would she have them hear what Candice said in her delirium. And to Katie the girl's ravings were a revelation, for the constant, never varying refrain was of Mark, begging him to tell the home folks.

Katie could not read or she would have known that the piece of paper she had taken from the girl's bosom was a marriage certificate, but thinking it was something of importance she laid it safely away until the girl should recover, if she ever did. She understood now that Mark Maynard was to blame for the girl's sad plight, and if she could have read the papers she would

have noticed Mark's advertisement for Candice to return to Valley Farm. But Katie, thinking she would do Candice a kindness by keeping silent, would not inform one single member of the Maynard family that she was with her. If Mark had appeared on the threshold of that cottage, the fiery Irish girl would have slammed the door in his face.

Katie took complete charge of the little flax-haired infant boy, with eyes of pansy blue and curling blonde hair, like those of the young father who had never gazed upon his baby boy, nor knew that Candice was a mother.

It was Katie who bought the fabrics and stitched away on garments for the pretty little infant that lay so contentedly at its unconscious mother's side. It was Katie who, when it cried with hunger, would patiently drop by drop put milk in its tiny mouth, and when it cried with pain would walk with it hour after hour until the little head drooped on her shoulder and it would sleep; and then with it tightly clasped to her she would sit for

hours holding it in her kind, strong arms, while it slept the dreamless sleep of infancy.

But at last Candice awoke once more with the light of reason shining in the wine-brown eyes, and looked about her wonderingly, first at Katie, in the big arm-chair, with the sleeping infant in her arms. She could not understand it. How came she here, with Katie by her side, and whose baby could that be?

“Katie!” she called, but her voice was weak and Katie not easily awakened; so with a little contented sigh Candice dropped off into a quiet, refreshing sleep.

When Katie awoke with a little guilty start, Candice was once more aroused and crying: “Where am I, Katie?” Her voice was weak and tremulous.

“Hush, darlint! you must not talk,” Katie said, soothingly, noting that this was not delirium. “Shure ’tis Katie that’s caring for you! Just lay there quiet like, and look at your baby;” and Katie laid the infant by her side.

“My baby?” and Candice gazed at it wonder-

ingly, as it lay with its little rosebud face close to hers. Now she remembered it all: her flight, and the search for Katie. How did she come here? She did not recollect finding her after searching so long, but Candice was very weak, and in the effort to remember once more fell asleep, when Katie stole on tip-toe from the room.

“The poor dear is better,” she said to her sister-in-law, “and I’m that worn out that if you will listen and see when she wakes, I’ll be after taking a breath of fresh air.”

It was that very day Leta and Alda had seen her from the window.

After that Candice’s recovery was quite rapid. She would lie for hours at a time watching the baby sleeping by her side, and trace in its tiny features a resemblance to the young husband at Valley Farm.

“My baby! oh! my baby!” she would whisper to it, softly, “what a heritage is yours!” and hot tears would chase each other down her pale young cheeks; but nevertheless she regained

her health rapidly, and in a few weeks was able to sit in the big easy-chair, propped up by pillows. One morning Katie wheeled her to the window. Candice started in surprise. The last thing she could remember was that the weather was cold, bitterly cold, and she was wandering out on the streets, friendless and alone; now the trees were full of summer's foliage, and the sunshine, glinting through the small window panes, bathed her pale face in its ruddy glow until it looked like that of some fair, pictured saint.

Candice was changed; so changed that if Mark had passed by at that moment he would not have recognized in this pale-faced, sad-eyed woman his rose-lipped, bonnie Candice of a little over a year ago.

Her eyes, roving over the busy throngs of people passing, saw them not; her thoughts were always of Mark, her young husband. She was thinking of him now with a yearning tenderness. Had he missed her in the least, or was he glad that she had taken her presence from out his life, although the shadow yet remained?

Candice's long auburn curls had been cut off close to her head during her sickness, and Katie had wrapped them in tissue paper and laid them away; now the young mother's head was covered with boyish locks, crisp and curling, of deepest, darkest brown; not one trace of reddish gold remained. And Candice, gazing at her changed appearance in the little mirror Katie brought her, was glad; for even if she should meet the folks from home they would scarcely recognize this dark-haired, widowed mother as the girl they remembered.

Katie was Candice's most devoted attendant, but as the young mother regained her strength she noticed that this kind Irish family were poor; the little shop barely afforded the commonest of livings, and Katie was forced to tend it more and more, while Pat worked as a day laborer whenever he could get work of any description whatever to do.

Candice saw with regret that every little delicacy was bought expressly for her, and that none of the family would touch a morsel of it; she

thought with dismay that it was through her money was so scarce with the Maguires. The doctor's bills and the additional expense of herself and baby had exhausted their little store of money, and Candice saw one day that kind-hearted Mrs. Maguire was making overalls at five cents a pair, a starvation price, for one of the neighboring shops. She was strong enough now and must do something. This charitable family must not support her in idleness; but what could she do with an infant on her hands?

CHAPTER XII.

THE ADVERTISEMENT.

IT was summer, warm and sultry, and the door leading from the sitting-room into the little shop where Katie tended was open. Candice, watching the kind-hearted Irish girl at her work, thought and thought constantly about what she could do to earn money, but the baby troubled her. What could she do with it?

Little Mark was crying now and Katie, bustling in from the shop, took him from his mother's arms.

"Shure it's meself," she said, laughing gayly, "that can take care of baby better than its own mother! Hush! hush! me darlint, Katie don't abuse the boy and mamma does!" and she tossed him, tumbled him until the little fellow actually laughed outright.

Katie really took most of the charge of the baby, and Candice, noting Katie's fondness for the child, was struck with a new idea. She would obtain a situation and Katie could tend shop and care for the baby also. Yes! yes! she must do something, and this was the only way; with a roof to cover her own head, she would save all her earnings for Katie and the baby.

"Bring me the papers, Katie, I want to look at them," Candice said, quickly.

"I'll go buy one," Katie said, quietly, "for we none of us read and there's none but wrappin' paper in the shop or house."

"All right, Katie," Candice said, cheerfully, full of her new project. "I'll take baby and you buy one of the latest editions," and Katie, obeying, hurried out, wondering what new idea Candice had in her head. But it was soon explained to her, for the first thing that the eyes of Candice noted was an advertisement of a position that she felt sure she could fill. It ran thus:

“WANTED—A young woman as companion for an invalid; must be prepossessing and intelligent.”

Then followed street and number at which application was to be made.

Candice noticed with satisfaction that no references were required, and calling Katie in she told her briefly what she was going to do.

“Oh! Miss Candice, you must not!” and Katie shook her head in a negative fashion, but when she found that Candice was determined she listened more quietly to her plans for the future.

“You must take care of Baby Mark,” the young mother said, with tears in her eyes, “and I will pay you for it, Katie.”

“No! no!” Katie said, decidedly. “I want no pay for caring for the darlint;” but Candice was firm and at last Katie consented reluctantly.

Now, for the first time since her sickness, Candice thought with some interest of her appearance, and concluding to still retain the widow’s

costume she manufactured a very becoming widow's cap from some lace that had been given to Katie by a kind-hearted mistress, and was soft and delicate. Candice surveyed it with satisfaction; it was very becoming.

But what troubled the young mother most was this: her eyes had been weak ever since her illness, and it had become necessary for her to wear glasses to shield them from the light—dark, smoke-colored glasses that hid her eyes so completely that one could not tell if they were black, blue, gray or brown, and after the first glance in the mirror Candice turned away sadly. She was not prepossessing; they would not employ her; but nevertheless she would try, and pressing her old black dress out as neatly as possible and donning it with the widow's hat and veil, she kissed Baby Mark sadly and started to search Chicago for the street and number designated in the advertisement; but this time it was not such a useless quest as her search for Katie had been, and she soon found herself, trembling

and excited, standing on the steps of a vast brown-stone mansion.

Ringling the bell quickly before her courage failed, she waited expectantly. Then she wildly thought of fleeing from the spot before the door was opened; but it was too late; already some one was coming. It was a servant.

“I called in answer to an advertisement I saw in the paper,” Candice said, hurriedly, fearing lest she should sink fainting on the door-step.

The man bade her follow him; passing through the marble-floored hall he opened a door and ushered her into a room all warmth and sunshine. A yellow bird hung in a gilded cage, nearly bursting its little throat in song, and an old man rose at her entrance. At first almost blinded by the flood of brightness in the room, such a strong contrast to the dark hallway through which she had just passed, she did not recognize him.

“I came in answer to the advertisement in to-day’s paper concerning a companion for an invalid,” she said.

She had taken a step forward eagerly and now, for the first time, gazed at the old man's face ; a startled cry escaped her lips, for it was Uncle Sam Desbro who stood before her ; had he recognized her ?

But no sign of recognition appeared in the keen old eyes regarding her curiously, yet kindly.

“Do you wish the position ?” he asked.

Should she tell him yes or, turning, flee from his presence ? But he had not recognized her ; why then should she give up this chance, if chance it were, for her own and baby's support ?

He would not know her, she was so changed ; and then those hateful glasses, how thankful she was for them now !

With lightning rapidity these thoughts chased each other through her brain. No, she would not throw this chance away, but trust to the changes in her to conceal her identity.

So, in answer to the old man's question, she responded low and tremulously that she would like the position if he thought she would suit.

Mr. Desbro asked several more questions, which she answered as quietly as she could, and then in braver tones as she saw she was not recognized she told him she was a widow with one child, a baby boy, and needed work so badly.

Mr. Desbro was very much interested in this pale young woman who stood almost like a culprit before him ; he thought she was timid and pitied her the more, but willingly as he would have taken her the baby was a great drawback, and he told her so in gentle, kindly tones.

“My dear Madam,” he said, earnestly, “I like your face and would give you the preference over all the other applicants if it were not for one thing, your baby. My ward is in a very precarious condition and the least noise excites her, so we could not very well manage with a baby in the house.”

“Oh ! sir,” Candice said, eagerly, “I did not mean that ! Indeed, I would not bring my baby here ; ’twill be well cared for elsewhere ; I would ask only that I might see it once in

awhile, whenever you could spare me from my duties."

"Poor child," he said, kindly, "you can come then and try it for a time ; if you do not like it, of course you need not stay, and you can go and visit your baby when you choose. Would you like to see Miss Lorne, the lady you are to attend?"

Candice answered in the affirmative, anxious now to have the ordeal over, and see if she could withstand another pair of eyes and come off unknown.

Alda was reclining in an invalid's chair, white and weak ; her hands which lay idly clasped in her lap were almost transparent, and the blue veins looked nearly black by contrast with the marble flesh. She was surely approaching closer and closer to the other shore ; only a few more weeks at the furthest could she linger on earth.

Mr. Desbro, approaching the invalid, said, softly: "Alda, this is the young woman I have engaged as companion to you. She will read to you and amuse you when you wish."

"You are very kind, Guardie," Alda said, tremulously, and then a spasm of coughing shook and racked her frame; after this was over she gazed curiously at the slight figure before her and then, ever courteous to strangers, said, kindly:

"You do not look very strong and you are tired; will you not have a chair?"

"No, thank you," Candice said, gratefully, feeling as if she were in an angel's presence. "I will hurry home, make a few preparations, and return immediately."

Mr. Desbro led her back to the cheerful room she had first entered, and then told her gravely the price he would pay for her services. "Does it suit you?" he said, wondering at her start of surprise.

"Suit me!" she said, sobs almost choking her utterance. "If you only knew what it will be to Baby Mark and me!" She said this quickly, gratefully, not thinking he might recognize that name, but he did not, and with a feeling of thankfulness in her heart that she would no

longer be dependent, she hurried rapidly toward home and Baby Mark, and catching him up from the bed where he was crowing and sucking his thumb at her entrance, she hugged him to her heart, thankful for the privilege of caring for her darling, her precious baby boy.

Katie was informed of the decision and listened wonderingly when Candice told who it was wanted her services.

“And they did not know you, poor darlint!” Katie said. “No wonder, for I would niver know you meself if I had not tinded you through it all!”

So Candice, after nearly smothering little Mark with kisses, left him, jumping and crowing contentedly in Katie’s arms, and retraced her steps toward the house she had left a short time before.

Her step was almost light, and the future looked brighter to her than it had done for months; no longer dependent on others’ bounty, she would work, live for Baby Mark!

No rustling breeze whispered of the sad-eyed

young husband at Valley Farm, mourning her loss as one dead and blaming himself for her shipwrecked life, while his sun seemed forever set in darkness! She imagined him always gay, laughing and indolent, with scarcely a thought for the young wife he had wronged so cruelly!

CHAPTER XIII.

ARDUOUS DUTIES.

IT was no sinecure, this serving as companion to an invalid, but work from morning till night. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak," and Candice for the first few days could scarcely bear it, and it was only the thought of baby that kept her up.

Strange as it may seem, this dying girl had taken a great liking to Candice.

"What shall I call you?" she had asked Candice on her arrival.

Poor child! she had not thought of that, and under a sudden impulse answered: "May; call me May, Miss Lorne."

"What is your whole name?" Alda asked, more for something to say than aught else, and Candice answered, truthfully enough this time:

“Lee; my name is Marion Lee, but call me May, Miss Lorne; do not call me Mrs. Lee.”

Alda complied, half wondering at the sharp pain in the young voice. How could she guess this dark-robed widow was thinking of the innocent Candice Lee who had gone to Valley Farm, and how that poor, tortured heart was yet quivering over the way in which her happy girlhood had ended?

The hands that smoothed the invalid's pillows were soft and tender, the voice that read to her by the hour was low and sweet, and the delicate broth and tempting morsels were all prepared by May with tender solicitude.

She looked in her black robes hovering over that sick couch like some gracious Sister of Charity, some fair, pale nun at her holy ministrations to the sick and dying; and Alda, noting the low voice and soft touch, had tenderly christened her “Sister May.”

And Sister May, who in days gone by had looked on this fair girl with envy and jealousy, now sought by every means in her power to

make her last days pass away at least in contentment. So essential to Alda's happiness did she become that when she awakened and Sister May was not by her side, her young eyes would wander restlessly toward the door until she made her appearance ; then with a little, contented sigh, the invalid would sink back among the pillows. May, as we must now call her, noticed Alda's partiality, and rarely left her side except to go for a few moments to kiss and fondle Baby Mark. Each time she gazed at the lovely infant it seemed as if Mark, her young husband, were before her in miniature. How she missed the tiny baby from her life ! No love is like a mother's love ; she longed with a longing, sometimes almost unbearable, to stay with baby always, and dreaded her return to the darkened chamber of sickness. But that was impossible. She could not remain with Baby Mark ; she knew he was well cared for, as Katie loved him dearly and spent every extra hour from the shop in fashioning dainty garments for her pet, her wee man, as she called

him. Candice came less and less frequently on account of Alda's condition. When she did come, however, and stretched out her arms to him expectantly, he would put his curly head close down on Katie's shoulder and glance in roguish rebellion at his anxious, waiting mother! Ah! babies are tyrants ever, and her heart would ache with a dull throbbing pain because her baby boy was forgetting her!

"Come, Mark," she would say, coaxingly; "come to mamma, darling!" but the curly blonde head would be instantly laid on Katie's broad shoulder, and the only thing Candice could do was to take him forcibly and carry him to the window to attract his attention; then he would stay very contentedly with her during the remainder of her visit.

'Twas very hard for her to be parted from Baby Mark, very, very hard; but who would want both mother and child? She must be content as it was. Should she not be grateful above all else for the situation so opportunely obtained?

Sometimes when she was reading to Alda her eyes would fill with a blinding rush of tears, and she would have to turn her head and dash them aside hurriedly. Alda must not see her cry. But Alda had already noticed the pale girl's sadness, and one day said, kindly, pityingly:

"Will you not tell me your story, Sister May? Tell me why you weep? Surely sympathy is sweet to us all."

But Sister May with a cry of intense pain sobbed wildly: "I cannot, oh! I cannot!"

Alda was not satisfied, and in low, pleading tones asked for her confidence.

"I will tell you my own heart sorrow first," she said, sadly; "then surely you will tell me yours; but you sorrow for the dead, I for the living. You think, perhaps, Sister May, that thoughts of love and marriage are not for me, but I have been foolish enough, wild enough, to indulge in them."

Here she was interrupted by a spell of coughing so long continued that it left her almost panting for breath; then she resumed.

“Last summer,” she said, softly, scarcely above her breath, “I first met him; he was so strong, so masterful, that my heart went out to him. I could not help it, though I had no right to think of earthly love.

“I loved him passionately and I love him yet! Mark! Mark! my darling!” and a throe of pain passed over the lovely face. “Nay, do not stop me,” she continued, as Sister May made a little, deprecating gesture and strove to stem the torrent of her words; “I love him, none save God knows how well, but he does not know it; however, it is better so, for ah! my love is not returned!”

Mark did not love this dying girl then! Even in that moment Sister May felt a little glad thrill steal through her; then pity for the young creature lying so helplessly before her filled her heart to the exclusion of all else. Alda's sorrow was almost as great as hers, loving for a year this handsome young man, not knowing he was already wedded, and finding it at last a case of unrequited passion, while the angel of death

was hovering over her, waving his black pinions above her head and waiting, waiting!

“Now will you not tell me what makes you sad?” It was Alda’s voice, wooing her from her reverie.

Sister May answered, in a tremulous voice: “Miss Lorne, I pity you, but oh! my story is too sad for even your sympathizing ears. I can tell you only this—if it were not for my baby boy I would not care to live! The man you adore was not untrue to you, for you never possessed his love; but my life was cruelly wrecked! Miss Lorne, my lover, loving me, wedded me and broke my heart!”

“But he is dead,” Alda said, gently, frightened at the storm of passion she had awakened in pale sad-eyed Sister May.

“Aye, he is dead to me,” the latter answered, almost sternly, but the words “to me” were very faintly uttered and Alda did not hear them; after this conversation there seemed a closer bond between these two fair women, and Sister May saw with a heart made still sadder,

if that could be, that Alda daily grew weaker and weaker.

Uncle Sam, as Alda always called Mr. Desbro, was very grateful to this black-robed woman who lingered so patiently at Alda's side; not the faintest wish was uttered but she fulfilled it if she could. He watched Sister May curiously. Somewhere in the far away past he had met some one who resembled this woman! Who could it be? He puzzled his brains in vain. A turn of the head or some gesture would set him thinking; occasionally it would almost come to him whom she resembled most; then a chance word would dispel the illusion, and he would be as completely in the dark as ever. This pale-faced widow was surely naught to him, yet he took a strange interest in her and more than once caught himself thinking about her baby boy. Only her glasses saved her from recognition, for if he had caught a glimpse of her wine-brown eyes the missing link would have been supplied and he would have remembered it all.

Sister May also was drooping. The old man

saw that. It was very hard on this delicate, tender woman, this night watching and daily attendance; but Alda would have no one else. She was selfish, possibly, but who could blame a dying girl?

The end was very near, and the old man's eyes were suspiciously full of moisture whenever he thought of it; Sister May was more attentive than ever; skilful doctors had met in earnest consultation, and the word had gone forth that Alda might live a day, even a week, but surely not longer. The sufferer guessed it from their pitying glances.

"Tell me, am I going to die?" she asked, reading her answer in their averted heads and saddened looks. She turned her face to the wall and lay in silence for some time; then she said, gently: "Uncle, guardie, I want you to send for Mark and Leta."

Knowing her pitiful secret, he consented, and that very afternoon a message went speeding over the wires.

CHAPTER XIV.

"I WILL GO TO HER."

THE leaves were just beginning to fall when the telegram came to Valley Farm, startling the inmates out of their accustomed quiet.

Alda dying! poor Alda! so very young to die!

Mrs. Maynard had not been very strong for some time, and the shock nearly unnerved her.

"I cannot leave mother," Leta said, nervously; "and oh! I cannot see Alda die! Do not ask me to go!"

Mark had answered, sternly: "Shame on you, Leta, for a coward! You must go, child; she has sent for you, remember, and I will go to her."

So Mark and Leta, with saddened hearts, hastened as fast as steam could carry them toward the city where Alda lay dying.

Alice was Mrs. Maynard's greatest comfort now; badly as the young girl wanted to see her dying friend, she would not leave her mother; so she was obliged to be content and wait for further tidings, which Mark had promised they would surely send.

Uncle Sam met the arrivals when they alighted from the hack at the gate. He shook hands with Mark kindly and touched his lips to Leta's forehead in greeting.

"How is she?" Mark almost whispered.

"Still with us, that is all," the old man answered, sadly, "and hourly asking for you."

A servant conducted them to their rooms, where they washed away the dust of travel and brushed their disordered hair; then, quietly, they awaited the summons to the sick room. It came at last, and with soft tread and saddened mien they entered the chamber. It was darkened; only a faint gleam of daylight shone through the closed shutters; some moments elapsed before Mark and Leta became accustomed to the gloom;

then Alda spoke; her voice was soft and low like the wind playing over the strings of a broken harp.

"Mark and Leta, come to me," she said.

Mark bent his handsome head reverently as he approached the dying girl, and, taking her poor little hand, said, brokenly: "Alda! oh! Alda!" That was all; his strong young voice, now as tender as a woman's, faltered and broke, while tears which were no disgrace to his manhood coursed down his sun-bronzed cheeks.

"Do not weep!" Alda said, gently. "Believe me, dear friends, it is best as it is. I could never be well and strong like others, and it is better, much better, for me to be at rest! Mark!" and Alda's voice sank almost to a whisper, "Mark! oh! my love, I could not die without seeing you once more! Girls do not generally tell their love," she added, with a little, wan smile, "but this is different, Mark, for I am dying!"

No one noticed the black-robed Sister May, crouching by the chair on which Alda was

lying; no one noticed the storm of sobs which shook her slender frame at the sound of her young husband's agitated voice.

"Alda! oh! Alda! my pure white dove, I am not worthy of such love as yours!" Mark groaned.

How did this black-robed kneeler know his heart was torn by bitter, reproachful thoughts? How did she know that this last confession of the dying girl was as so many dagger points piercing his heart?

He had sinned, had wrecked his own life by his indolent ways; his wife, his poor, wronged darling, he had driven from him, and now this confession came to him from Alda's dying bed, and well he knew he was not wholly guiltless. He had won her love carelessly, thoughtlessly, and he a married man; but she did not know it, did not dream of it.

"You will not leave me, Mark?"

"No, I will not leave you, dear!" and Mark, with her frail young hands clasped closely in his, stood quietly, patiently waiting. Once the pale lips murmured faintly, and Mark, bending

above her, heard her sweet voice speak his name and then these words :

“ Will you not kiss me, Mark ? ”

He complied, tenderly, lovingly, pressing his warm young lips to hers, already chilled by death.

All through the long hours of the night he sat there, scarcely stirring for fear of disturbing her ; but when the first gray streaks of morning shone in the leaden sky they noticed a change in her, and, standing silently about the couch, they sadly awaited the end.

The eyelids fluttered, opened, and gazing at them from the very borders of the other world, Alda noted only two faces and her pale lips whispered : “ Mark ! Guardie ! ”

Then all was over ; the spirit no longer inhabited that fair tenement of flesh ; Alda Lorne was with the angels !

Stifled sobs filled that chamber of death ; when the old man, stretching out his kind old arms and finding naught but emptiness, staggered from the room, it was black-robed Sister May who led him tenderly away and cheered him with loving words of comfort.

CHAPTER XV.

NEW ARRANGEMENTS.

THE last sad rites had been paid to the dead, and Alda slept under the waving grasses and fresh mold in the old churchyard.

Only these words, "Asleep in Jesus," and then further up on the cold marble surface of the tombstone was traced, "Alda Lorne; aged 19 years and 21 days."

That was all; but oh! how much it meant to the saddened hearts left behind. Mr. Desbro spent hours at a time in his own room, seeing no one, and scarcely eating or sleeping. Mark and Leta still lingered, for they could not leave the kind old man so prostrated by grief.

The only person who could rouse him was May, and as she went around, silently minis-

tering to his wants, she looked indeed like some kind Sister of Charity.

Mark watched her wonderingly. He too was struck by the resemblance she bore to some one he had seen ; but after pondering on the subject for some time he gave it up. It was only fancy, perhaps, yet the remembrance would come back with startling force. He had surely met this silent, pale woman before !

Once he came upon her suddenly in the old library. She was hunting a book to read to his Uncle Sam ; for a moment he watched her silently ; the sad, pale, high-bred face, the rounded arm from which her sleeve fell gracefully away as she reached for a book on one of the higher shelves, all seemed strangely familiar to him. Her glasses were in her hand, and her eyes, large and pitifully sad, were eagerly scanning the tiers of volumes. A movement betrayed his presence, and in a twinkling those hateful glasses were quickly replaced.

“ Did I startle you ? ” he asked, kindly, noticing her agitation.

“Oh! no!” and the answer was almost inaudible. Grasping the first book her hand came in contact with, she hurried from the room.

How could he know that her heart was almost bursting with sorrow, and that this hired companion of the dead girl was longing to extend her arms to him and sob out her pain on his shoulder? He never even suspected that she ran straight to her own room and, locking the door, sobbed bitterly over her shattered life, and that the glasses that covered her eyes were thrown aside hurriedly as if she almost hated the sight of them! It was well he had not seen those eyes closely; those wonderful wine-brown orbs would have betrayed her instantly.

The widow's cap had fallen off, and the short, clustering curls of darkest brown were tossed and tumbled. “Oh! baby! baby!” she moaned, “but for you I too could die!” The storm of grief, however, was soon spent; smoothing her hair plainly across her forehead and donning once more the widow's cap and glasses, she again sought the lonely old man. He was sit-

ting by the window, gazing absently out; he looked up glad to see her enter.

“What would I do without you!” he said, sadly. “You are my only comfort now!”

“But, Mr. Desbro, you must remember,” she said softly, in reply, “that I have nothing to keep me here longer. You engaged me as companion to Miss Lorne; she has left us, and I must go back to Baby Mark.”

“True; I had forgotten,” he said, noting her drooping form and saddened face. “I have been selfish in my grief. You can go back to your baby, but you cannot stay. I cannot get along without you, child, and you can bring your baby with you to help cheer the old man’s life! You are alone in the world,” he added, as she hesitated. “Why should we not comfort one another? Bring your baby, Mrs. Lee, and make this your home for the future; I cannot forget your kindness to the dead!”

She consented, almost stunned by her good fortune.

“I thank you,” she said, brokenly, “for what

you have offered me—a home and the privilege of caring for my Baby Mark!”

“What did you call him?” the old man asked, quickly; he had noticed the name for the first time. What should she do? Mr. Desbro was watching her narrowly and she answered, as quietly as she could:

“His name is Mark, the same as that of your nephew.”

“Mark Lee!” the old man said, dreamily. “’Tis a strange coincidence, for Lee was Sister Annie’s name!”

Her heart was throbbing painfully, and to escape observation she commenced tidying up the room. The old man did not notice her agitation; he was thinking of the baby, and in a few moments he said, almost harshly:

“Mrs. Lee, you must not call your baby Mark. Call him Tom, Dick or Harry, anything but that; I do not like the name!”

“How would Sam suit you?” she answered, quietly. “I will call him what you wish, you have been so kind to me.”

So it was all arranged. Mrs. Lee was to have a short rest and then come back to the brown-stone house, bringing little Sam with her.

Mark and Leta still lingered, but Mark was restless and wandered all over the city, peering into each face as if half expecting to meet his young girl-wife somewhere. She had seemed very near to him of late; he found himself picturing her face as it used to look at Valley Farm; first, like a dainty rosebud; next, pale and spiritless, as in the weeks before her disappearance. Where was she now? Perhaps buried in a pauper's grave! Perhaps—and here he stopped, for wherever she was, his Candice, he knew, was pure and good.

A summons to return came to them from Valley Farm, and now the old man would be left in utter loneliness; they wanted him to go with them, but he would not; he did not tell them so, but he could not bear to meet Kezia, who had used her sister Annie's child so cruelly.

CHAPTER XVI.

FOREIGN LANDS.

MARK and Leta returned to Valley Farm, saddened by the scenes just witnessed, and found their mother quite prostrated; but she soon regained her usual health, and then life went on there as usual; but Mark was changed more than ever, and, to his sisters' deep regret and his mother's sorrow, commenced making preparations to go abroad.

"I cannot stay here, mother," he said, in answer to her tears and entreaties; "I must go, I must travel, or I believe I will go mad!" Then Mrs. Maynard had given her consent. When she saw the mute anguish in his eyes, she hastened his departure, for was she not to blame for his darkened life? Everything was in readiness, when an imperative message

was received from his uncle, commanding his immediate presence as he was Alda's heir, the inheritor of all her vast possessions. Never until now did Mark realize how well this fair girl had loved him, and he thought with regret of the money left to him so unexpectedly; but it was lawfully his, and so he started for Chicago with a heart heavier than lead.

His uncle met him kindly, but Mark always felt embarrassed in his presence, and was glad when the preliminaries were over and the matter was settled. He was fabulously rich, thanks to fair Alda Lorne.

A few weeks later, a vessel sailing from New York bore Mark Maynard among her passengers, an exile from friends and home, a miserably unhappy man; his own follies had made him what he was. Even his wealth could not buy him happiness. Remorse gnawed at his heart-strings, and now in foreign climes he sought forgetfulness.

He had entrusted all his money matters to Uncle Sam, who was to see to everything during

his absence. The look of hopeless misery on the young man's face had touched his uncle's heart at last, and he pitied his nephew who had been punished so severely.

Mrs. Lee was once more domiciled at the brown-stone house, and Baby Sam, as she tried to call him but failed sometimes, was getting used to his new quarters. His mamma had been almost strange to him at first, but by dint of coaxing and loving words he gradually became accustomed to his new surroundings and crowed as contentedly as he did in Katie's brawny arms.

Katie, poor girl, was at first inconsolable over the loss of her "wee man," and shed tears copiously, although she did not try to keep him one minute from his young mother.

"He'll forget poor Katie," she said, sadly, but was finally comforted by a promise from Candice to come often and bring the baby with her to see his kind nurse. "Shure 'tis tearing me heart-strings, it is," she said, plaintively, "but Katie will niver stand in the darlint's light!" With

her blue checked apron to her eyes, she had shed a perfect torrent of tears, when like April sunshine the smiles broke through. She kissed and fondled the baby, and then, handing him to his mother, went into the cottage and shut the door, for she could not bear to watch him vanish from her sight.

Candice went away heavy-hearted; but Mark was hers; she could not give him up, and Katie would soon get used to his absence.

The mother tried at first to keep the child out of Mr. Desbro's sight as much as possible. "He may not like babies," she thought, nervously, and little Sam had been there several weeks before the old man asked for him.

"Mrs. Lee," he said suddenly one day, "where is your baby? I have not seen him yet."

"He is here," she said. "I thought he had disturbed you ere this; he's a noisy little fellow," she continued, with a thrill of pride in her gentle voice.

"Go get him, my dear," Mr. Desbro said, quietly. "I must become acquainted with the little fellow."

Candice complied, eager to show her dainty darling, but trembled when she noticed once more the startling resemblance the child bore to his young father, now sailing across the ocean.

Had Mr. Desbro heard aught of her sad story? She did not know; she could not guess; but if he had, and there was at least a possibility of it, might he not suspect her? This then would decide it all; with the baby, kicking and crowing lustily, she entered the old man's presence and held her darling out straight before him, saying:

“Mr. Desbro, this is my boy, my Baby Sam!”

She looked at him in fear. Yes, it was just as she expected; he was gazing at the little fellow with a wondering, surprised look in his eyes.

“Is he not a fine boy?” she said, trying to speak quietly, but her voice trembled as she spoke.

“Strange I never thought of that!” he said, abruptly. “My dear, will you tell me what his own name is?”

“Mark,” she replied; her lips could scarcely form the word.

“How old is he?” Now Mr. Desbro was looking straight at her.

“One year old next January, the seventh day of the month.”

“Just as I thought!” he said, briefly. “Now, Mrs. Lee, will you humor an old man’s whims yet a little further by removing your cap and glasses? I have a fancy to see how you look without them!”

Ah! heavens! he knew her then, and she would soon be homeless and friendless once more! She was almost tempted to snatch her baby boy closer to her heart and hurry from the house; anything rather than see those kind old eyes harden in anger toward her, for had not Mrs. Maynard said he never wished to look upon Annie or hers again?

She did not turn and flee, however, but stood there, staring at him helplessly. Had she not suffered enough already for this kind old man to be spared to her?

For just one moment Samuel Desbro waited, and then, before she was aware of his intention, he had stepped to her side and with one dextrous turn of the hand had swept cap and glasses from her!

There she stood before him, her wine-brown eyes fixed on him imploringly, a slim, dark-robed girl, with ringlets of darkest brown covering her shapely head. There she stood, the picture of abject woe, waiting for him to inflict still greater torture.

“Poor child!” The words were spoken softly.

Could it be possible he did not quite hate her then?

“Uncle Sam,” she sobbed, wildly, “believe me, I have done no wrong! Can you not forgive my mother now, and pity her wretched child?”

“Forgive your mother, girl? I have nothing to forgive, and I thank God that you are spared to me in my old age!”

Now she was sobbing in his arms, and Baby Mark, in round-eyed wonder, gazed at them for

one minute, then set up an infantile cry of alarm that soon recalled them to themselves.

The whole sad story was then repeated. Candice dwelt as lightly as possible on her treatment at Valley Farm, and only by the drawn lips and panting breath did Uncle Sam know how much she had suffered. She told of her appeal to her young husband and her own miserable suspicions concerning his love for Alda; then of her flight through the cold and darkness, her search for Katie and how it ended, and of her sickness and Baby Mark.

"You know the rest," she said, softly; "how I came in answer to your advertisement. You took me in, and now Baby Mark has betrayed me!"

Uncle Sam informed her of Mark's confession after her flight, of the search which ended so fruitlessly, and of Mark's miserable, saddened life. Candice wept softly during the recital, but her tears were tears of thankfulness, for was not the shadow lifted from about her life? Her young husband had acknowledged her!

“We never thought of the baby,” the old man said, sadly. “Candice, my poor girl, how much you have suffered through other people’s wrong doings! Hereafter, your life shall be all sunshine, and Baby Mark’s bed shall be of down! We will call him Mark Samuel!” he said, pleasantly, trying to bring a smile to Candice’s sad young lips.

“Uncle, where is Mark, my husband?”

Then he told her that, restless and dispirited, Mark had gone over the waters to find some “balm in Gilead,” if that were possible.

“Poor Mark! he too has suffered!” Candice said, sadly; “but, uncle, you must promise me something. When Mark returns, I must don my widow’s cap and glasses undisturbed, and let him find for himself the wife he would not acknowledge! I will not go to him and say, ‘I am Candice; take me back!’ He must win me, prove his love, before I return to him!”

The old man promised gladly, respecting her the more for her decision.

CHAPTER XVII.

LETTERS FROM ABROAD.

SAMUEL DESBRO was greatly pleased to discover his niece in Mrs. Lee, and little Mark became a perfect tyrant; nothing was too good for Candice and her baby. Katie had been installed as nurse, and was nearly wild with happiness over the way in which things had turned out.

“You deserve it all, Miss Candice,” she said, warmly. “Shure ’tis Katie knows the angel of goodness ye are, more shame to some that don’t appreciate—”

“Hush! Katie,” interrupted Candice; “we must not censure others. What would have become of the ‘angel of goodness’ if it hadn’t been for Katie Maguire?”

Katie was vanquished and spoiled little Mark the more for it.

Candice was almost happy. It was only when she thought of Mark that her gentle heart was saddened; still she was determined not to call him back. She became blooming and cheerful once more under the wealth of affection that was lavished upon her. She yet wore her widow's garb, leaving off the cap and glasses to please Uncle Sam. If any of the folks come from Valley Farm," she said earnestly, "I must don them again; they must know me only as Mrs. Lee, your late ward's companion." But no one came from the farm. Mrs. Maynard was broken in health and the girls could not be spared; so Uncle Sam and Candice were undisturbed in their calm serenity.

Two months, three months passed, and still they had not heard from the wanderer. He corresponded with the home folks, who wrote Uncle Sam occasionally, informing him of Mark's whereabouts.

At last a letter came, post-marked "London." The young man wrote in glowing terms of the places he had visited and the sights he had seen;

but through it all ran such sadness that Candice felt hot tears blind her eyes as she read.

“I know not when I shall come back, if ever,” he wrote in conclusion. “I have nothing left to call me home save mother and the girls, and they can do without me. Perhaps this restlessness will wear away at last, and then I will return.”

A few days later, at Uncle Sam's dictation Candice answered Mark's letter, stating how his business affairs stood and then giving all the items they thought might be of interest to him. She pressed a kiss upon the written words over which her young husband's eyes would wander.

Month after month elapsed; Baby Mark was now walking all over the house, his fond nurse, Katie, watching him rapturously as she noted each newly-gained infant accomplishment.

“He's the smartest baby in the world!” she said, shaking her fiery head knowingly; “shure Katie's traveled clear from auld Ireland, and she niver saw the likes of him before!” Of course, Uncle Sam and mamma acquiesced in this decision.

The home folks at Valley Farm heard strange rumors in regard to Uncle Sam and the young widow in whom he had taken so much interest; such interest, in fact, that even Alda's death had lost its bitterness. Some actually went so far as to say that an old fool is the biggest fool of all, and that there was no knowing what might happen, for report credited the widow with being very lovely. Mrs. Maynard wrote to Mark about it, wondering if it could be true, and for once Mark was interested in the news from home. He recalled the young widow who had interested him so strangely. "Some low adventuress" his mother termed her, but he thought of Candice and turned half angrily from the letter. Might not his wife be wandering somewhere on earth, alone and friendless, as this widow seemed to be! If she should find a home in her dire extremity, might not these same motives be imputed to his pure white darling? Ah! no! he would not judge this fair young widow, who had found refuge beneath his uncle's roof!

Mark read the letters from his Uncle Sam, written in a delicate female hand, with more interest than heretofore, and unconsciously, when he answered them, poured out his very soul on the paper's smooth, white surface. He wrote to her, not as the adventuress, but as the black-robed Sister May he had seen so devoted to fair Alda Lorne and to the kind old man who, in his bereavement, would have sunk beneath the burden but for the cheering words spoken by her sweet, patient voice.

Uncle Sam, after the first letter came, never seemed half so much interested in Mark's wanderings as he had heretofore been; when the next one arrived he handed it to Candice, saying: "You read it, my dear, and tell me how he is. I believe the boy is crazy to write such letters to his old uncle! I don't want to hear the trash! I can't understand it!"

Candice was glad; she could not bear to read her husband's epistles aloud, for it seemed to her like sacrilege to do so. Soon Uncle Sam's name was unconsciously dropped, and the letters, post-

marked from different cities in the old country, were simply directed to Mrs. Lee. Was it not singular that this husband and wife should be writing to each other as the veriest strangers? But so it was, and Mark caught himself thinking about this Mrs. Lee more than he cared to admit.

He had known very little about his young wife after all; and he thought wonderingly, as he gazed at the last letter from the Queen City, that he had never seen her handwriting—his wooing had been brief and their married life a mistake. Mortified and heart-broken, Candice had left him without a word or a written line.

Letters passed freely between Mark and his uncle's protégée, and thoughts of home frequently intruded themselves upon the young man. He had been absent a year, and was longing for a sight of familiar faces. One night, a few weeks afterwards, he stood on the deck of a homeward bound vessel, gazing at the fast vanishing shore he was leaving behind.

Sometimes he was glad he was returning, and

then he felt angered that he had obeyed his heart's impulses and was speeding back to the home where naught but disappointment could possibly await him.

He sent a telegram to his uncle, when he arrived in New York, to inform him that he would be with him in a few days. The news came like a clap of thunder in their midst.

"What shall I do, uncle?" Candice said, tremblingly. "He must not know me; I must again put on my cap and glasses."

"Wear your glasses, my dear," her uncle responded, smoothing her short curls affectionately, "but do not cover these! He will not know them. He remembers them as red, and they are darkest brown now."

She consented; but oh! how she dreaded to meet Mark! Would he not recognize her immediately?

Baby Mark, through some strange infantile freak, called Uncle Sam papa. In vain they strove to teach him to say grandpa as more suitable; it was always papa!

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOME AGAIN.

EAGERLY Mark ascended the steps of the brown-stone mansion and rang the bell. Ah! it was delightful to be at home again. He realized now what it was to be a wanderer forever in a strange land. After all, home is the dearest spot on earth!

The servant was very long in answering the summons, and, impatient at the delay, Mark opened the door and entered the old hallway. A tiny figure came toward him. It was Baby Mark; he had escaped from Katie and was trying to find Uncle Sam, who always petted and caressed him. He saw the wanderer standing in the hallway and toddled forward eagerly; the little one did not notice that he was a stranger, but, stretching out his small arms, said, coaxingly:

“Oh! I’s found my pitty papa! Won’t oo hold me tight and not let Katie find me?”

Mark, seeing the child’s mistake, took the chubby treasure in his arms and kissed him passionately. He, too, he thought, might have had a wife and child but for his follies; now, he must live his life alone; and hot tears fell on the little fellow’s curly head.

“What oo crying for?” said baby, looking up at him wonderingly. Sure enough, what was he crying for?

Baby Mark was a precocious child, never afraid of strangers, and, after the first amazed look when he found out his mistake, he rested contentedly in the strong arms encircling him. With the child still clinging about his neck, Mark entered the sitting-room, where he knew his uncle spent most of his time.

Yes! there he was, sitting by the fire, half asleep.

“Uncle!”

“Bless my soul, Mark! is that you?” the old man exclaimed, rising hastily and shaking the

extended hand. "I am glad to see you, my dear boy; but where did you find the baby?" he continued, gazing in astonishment at the child clinging so contentedly about the young man's neck.

"Don't he belong here?" Mark asked. "I found him in the hallway, hunting for his 'pitty papa,' and thought he was some visitor's child."

"Yes, he belongs here," Uncle Sam answered, hastily; "he is Mrs. Lee's little boy."

"Ah! indeed!" and Mark gazed at the child curiously. What a fine boy he was! The young man had not thought much of his own appearance lately, or he certainly would have noticed the startling resemblance the child bore to himself.

The little fellow was sitting contentedly in Mark's lap, when the door opened softly and some one paused on the threshold. Uncle Sam glanced up quickly and noticed a timid, shrinking, girlish figure standing there.

"Come in, my dear."

Candice advanced quietly, but her eyes behind the dark-hued glasses were wild and troubled.

"This is my nephew, Mark Maynard, Mrs. Lee."

She held out her hand to welcome him, and he clasped it lightly. He did not recognize her, although the fair profile turned toward him was startlingly familiar. The hair deceived him—those rippling waves of darkest brown.

"Come to mamma, baby; nurse wants you," Candice said, coaxingly, anxious to escape from the room. But baby would not stir; he only clung the tighter to his unknown friend.

It was a strange sight, this lovely baby clinging so closely about Mark's neck; and he, unconscious it was his own child he was caressing, was pleased at his infantile rebellion.

"Let him stay, my dear," the old man said, kindly; "he has taken a notion to Mark!"

Candice, her eyes dim with tears, hurried from the room.

Mark lingered for several weeks in the city, as his business required considerable attention. He

told his uncle he had not touched one cent of Alda's money because he felt so unworthy of her generosity.

Day by day Mark was thrown into the society of Mrs. Lee and her baby boy, but somehow he had never noticed Katie. He often found himself wondering who it was Mrs. Lee resembled so much, and it came to him suddenly that it was Candice, his wronged young wife! From the fancied resemblance he became fond of her society, and was content only in her presence. Sometimes he imagined she, too, felt interested in him. What did it mean, he repeatedly asked himself, this interest he felt in one who rumor reported was soon to be the old man's bride? What was she or her baby to him? And his sad heart answered, "Nothing!" It was part of his punishment perhaps, he thought, bitterly, to find this fair, sad woman who resembled his lost wife, and regard her with a love that could bring him naught but pain!

One evening, after his uncle had retired and

when Mrs. Lee, with some dainty needle-work in her hand, was sitting quietly sewing by the light of the chandelier, he determined to tell her his sad experience. Why should he not? He was going away in the morning, and her pity would be something for him to think of in the years to come.

"Mrs. Lee," he said, sadly, "I should like to tell you my life story. Would you care to listen to me?"

She nodded her head gently. It was coming at last, this story she knew so well! Was he as repentant as he seemed? She would know everything now!

"I made a great mistake," Mark said, with a quiver of pain in his young voice, "a mistake that has wrecked my fondest hopes!" And then he told her all, blaming himself alone for his unhappiness. He said in conclusion: "Do you think I can ever be happy again, Mrs. Lee? I have not yet told you I have presumed to love once more! It can do no harm to inform you," he continued, dreamily, "that

I, with my ruined life, have dared to love you, Mrs. Lee, knowing as I do that I can never offer you my heart and hand!"

She looked up quickly, joyously; he loved her then, after all this weary waiting! He loved her, and had been true to his young wife always! Her work dropped from her nerveless hands; but she could not reveal herself yet, no! no!

"Your story saddens me," she said, in a low tone, "but I am greatly interested in it. I also have had troubles of which I will tell you in the morning, if you desire to listen. I, too, have been foolish enough to care for you!"

She quitted him without another word, and he was alone. She cared for him then! Was it not bitterly unjust that he should suffer so cruelly for that one wrong committed in his youth? He would seek her in the morning, bid her good-bye and go abroad again after visiting the folks at home; he could not remain here longer.

What was that? The door-bell ringing at this late hour in the evening! Mark answered

it hastily; a messenger boy stood on the door-step. Mark took the telegram; it was addressed to himself, and opening it he read:

“Come home at once.

ALICE.”

Seeking his uncle, Mark told him of the message and then at once prepared for his departure.

CHAPTER XIX.

LETA'S ELOPEMENT.

AT Valley Farm life dragged on monotonously. Alice noted her mother's restless, dissatisfied manner, and tried by gentle feminine arts to win her from herself; but it was of no avail, for remorse was gnawing at this proud woman's heart. She would have given anything could she have had Mark and Candice with her as of old.

With Leta the time hung heavily at first, and then she plunged, almost recklessly, into society pleasures. Was it any wonder that a bright young girl should prefer the companionship of those of her own age and gay assemblies to the saddened atmosphere of her home?

Mrs. Maynard could not bear the sight or sound of revelry, and utterly refused to have

any social gatherings at the farm house ; so both girls went more and more into society, shunning the darkened rooms at Valley Farm. Leta was much admired, and flattery soon turned her head.

About this time there came to the neighborhood a good-looking young stranger calling himself Leon Tatro. He claimed to be of French descent, and no one could doubt the assertion after a glance at his darkly handsome face and hearing his unmistakable accent.

At first, many were the whisperings and surmises in regard to him, but when Dame Rumor credited him with possessing immense wealth and an ivy-grown villa in the southern part of France, the story flew from lip to lip until the proudest and most aristocratic families opened their doors wider and wider, inviting this foreigner to visit them. For a time he shunned their advances, and then society, feeling aggrieved, redoubled its efforts to draw him into the gay whirlpool of well-bred dissipation. Gradually he accepted the invitations,

and the proud families that entertained him royally smiled scornfully at their less fortunate neighbors.

That Leon Tatro was handsome the most fastidious could not deny. Large and muscular, yet carrying himself with a stately grace hard to imitate, he had a face worthy of a line of titled ancestors, so deeply was the seal of pride stamped upon the haughty features. His eyes were dark and melancholy in their expression, yet sometimes, when most courted as society's favorite, a cruel gleam would come into their liquid depths, making him appear like some Satanic agent, biding his time to commit some evil act.

Dame Rumor also gave him a title along with his immense wealth, and so foolish are Americans as a general rule where noblemen are concerned that it imparted additional glory to his already seemingly enviable position. Managing mammas courted him assiduously all for their sweet daughters' sakes, and the fairest of the fair smiled encouragingly at his approach.

At one of the numerous social gatherings Leta met this Leon Tatro, and after that night life was never the same to her again. He, on his side, sought her as persistently as he had refused all other overtures.

Leta was visiting a friend in a neighboring town, and Leon haunted her steps continually. At the opera and other entertainments he was her most constant attendant, and at last, poor girl, she learned the lesson of loving "not wisely, but too well."

"My darling!"

Leon Tatro had followed Leta from the heated atmosphere of the ball-room out on the wide, cool veranda that night, when these two words fell on her waiting ear like liquid melody. She stood gazing at him expectantly, with a strange feeling of distrust for she knew not what.

Surely this was the supreme moment in a woman's life, when the man she loves acknowledges his love for her in return!

"My darling! I may call you that, may I not? I am not deceived; I have read in your

sweet eyes a love for me equal to that I feel for you!"

Why did she not cry out indignantly, and spurn him from her like some polluted thing? Why did not some pitying angel show this girl the blighted lives for which this ardent lover, pleading so humbly before her, was not wholly blameless! Alas! she stood there quietly, her fair head bowed before him, suffering his kisses to be placed on cheeks and red, trembling lips.

When she returned to the ball-room her eyes shone like twin stars, and her step was light and buoyant as she moved among the dancers. The glare and glitter of the fête were all unnoticed by her. Was she not his love, his choice? Ah! yes; but Leon Tatro's love was to be the curse instead of the crown of her life!

After that night, Leta lived as in a dream. Her handsome, noble lover was all in all to her, yet ever and anon a sickening distrust would assail her. Why, she could not tell. As well ask the wind why it rustled the leaves in the tree-tops and expect an answer!

When Leta returned to Valley Farm she became gloomy and taciturn. The sunshine seemed less bright to her and the atmosphere oppressive. She wished Leon to acknowledge their engagement, but he delayed it from day to day, seemingly unconscious of the wrong he was thus doing his fair fiancée. Several times she was on the verge of telling her mother all, when some cold word, some slight repulse, invariably checked her and she remained silent. How much misery Leta would have avoided had she bravely spoken!

Alice and Leta were rather given to ridiculing each other's love affairs; therefore the latter never for one moment thought of making a confidante of her sister. Thus the weeks dragged along. Mark was writing vaguely of his return home at no distant date, when society, for miles and miles about Valley Farm, was shocked, horrified, at several events that occurred in rapid succession.

Articles of value were missing from nearly every wealthy mansion in the vicinity. One

farmer had sold his wheat at the adjacent town, and was knocked down and robbed of the proceeds while on his way home through the gathering darkness. Many were the whispered surmises in regard to the rascal or rascals who infested the locality. Each farm house was fortified by new catches to the windows, and burglar alarms were as thick as flowers in June. Leon Tatro suggested several theories in relation to the matter, and instituted a seemingly careful search through the neighborhood for some trace of the lawless ruffians, but no sign of them was found. The excitement was gradually dying out, when once again the shock came. The bank in the neighboring town was robbed so cleverly and with such alarming results that the whole country for miles around was startled. The night watchman was overcome, chloroformed, and hurled out of doors; the safe was blown open, and the money and valuables abstracted. A policeman passing along shortly afterwards noticed nothing amiss until he stumbled over the body of the watchman,

lying directly in his path. Immediately the alarm was given and search instantly made, but the robber and his spoils had vanished as completely as if the earth had hidden them in her bosom.

That same night Leta was missing from Valley Farm. She had taken everything she possessed—her clothes and her jewelry—leaving a note behind, which ran as follows:

“MOTHER: I am going to leave you and Valley Farm for a husband and home of my own. I cannot explain at present, but some time you will know. I am sorry to leave Alice and you, but, mother, I cannot give him up.
LETA.”

Mrs. Maynard was found by Alice in the morning, sitting by the fire and muttering incoherently. Her eyes were haggard and tearless, and she babbled incessantly of Mark and Candice, always of Mark and Candice, and never a word of the daughter who had tried her proud

old heart so sorely. Surely this was retribution for her treatment of her son's wife!

Alice placed her mother in bed and sent for the physician, who shook his head gravely.

"Has she sustained a sudden shock?" he asked.

"She has been much tried lately," Alice answered, evasively.

"Brain fever," the doctor said, and so it proved. Week after week Alice nursed her mother patiently. To all inquiries concerning her sister she invariably replied: "Leta has gone on a visit."

But Alice grew pale and heavy-eyed; even Ann, the stolid German servant, noted her drooping appearance with a doleful shake of the head, and tried in her stupid, kindly way to make the burden a little lighter for the young girl's shoulders.

CHAPTER XX.

IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?

MRS. MAYNARD, struggling back from the dim borders of the spirit-land, frequently asked herself: "Is life worth living?" But she grew stronger day by day until pronounced convalescent. Then she took up the threads of her life again and strove to be as of old, but made a miserable failure. The haughty, supercilious woman of the past had vanished, and a broken-hearted, sad-eyed woman had replaced her.

Leta's name never crossed Mrs. Maynard's lips in all these weeks. Alice alone knew that her mother kept solitary vigil far into the night, and that when she retired her pillow would be wet with tears and her slumber fitful and broken.

Alice was changed also; she had become a very self-reliant young woman, managing the

house and superintending the outside work successfully. Leta's elopement had deprived her of all taste for society, and she steadily refused to attend social gatherings.

Leon Tatro was now generally conceded to be the scoundrel who had robbed the bank. Handbills were posted all over the country, describing his appearance and offering liberal rewards for his capture. Leta's continued absence also occasioned remark. Some heads, wiser than others, put this and that together until the whole shameful story was suspected.

One neighbor, more daring than the rest, volunteered to visit Valley Farm to find out the truth of the matter. This neighbor, Mrs. Levy, was noted for her long tongue. She was a vivacious little woman, but rather injudicious in her remarks. She was not a favorite with the Maynard family, and had never been a frequent visitor at their house. When she presented herself on this occasion, she was received with cool politeness.

Nothing daunted, she kept up a perfect stream

of small talk, telling the latest news in her spiciest manner. At last she broached the subject of Tatro's disappearance, and noted with inward satisfaction Alice's start of surprise when the date was mentioned. Summoning all her courage, she remarked to Mrs. Maynard :

"I am so sorry Leta went away about that time. People will talk, you know, and gossip reports that Leon Tatro and Leta departed together. Of course, it is untrue, but—"

"That will do, Mrs. Levy." It was Mrs. Maynard who spoke, in a voice so hoarse with anger and emotion that Alice looked up at her wonderingly.

Mrs. Levy paused abruptly, and her eyes sank beneath the indignant mother's glance.

"Of course, you cannot blame me, Mrs. Maynard," she resumed. "I only mentioned the coincidence. It is strange, is it not?"

"Mrs. Levy," — Mrs. Maynard had now regained her composure, although her voice still trembled with emotion—"I am entirely able to attend to my own affairs, and I shall

surely not publish my private troubles to the four winds of heaven by confiding them to you!"

"Do you mean to insinuate that I am a gossip?" Mrs. Levy asked, angrily.

"I insinuate nothing," Mrs. Maynard answered, proudly; "I state a fact. Good afternoon, Mrs. Levy!"

"Mother, perhaps Mark is in Chicago!" Alice broke the silence shortly after their unwelcome visitor's departure with this remark.

"It is strange we do not hear from him!" Mrs. Maynard said, with an anxious tone in her voice. "Alice, do you think it would do any good to telegraph to Chicago? Perhaps he is at Uncle Sam's."

"I don't know, I am sure, mother," Alice answered with a sigh, "but I guess I will try it once more;" and rising, she put on her outdoor wraps and started for the station. "Don't wait tea for me, mother," she called out when nearly at the gate. "I will walk slowly, for I am tired of indoor life."

Mrs. Maynard did not heed the injunction. She waited patiently for her daughter's reappearance, and they sat down to their evening meal, waited on attentively by kind-hearted Ann.

"Did you send the message?" Mrs. Maynard asked the question anxiously.

"I did," Alice responded, "and I am in hopes Mark is at uncle's, transacting his business affairs. It's my opinion, mother, he intends to surprise us by returning home unexpectedly."

"Let us hope that nothing serious delays him," Mrs. Maynard rejoined, sadly.

The next morning Mrs. Maynard was feverishly restless, and strayed from room to room aimlessly. She looked over the household linen, darned it carefully, and then wandered down to the shore of Fairy Lake. The little sheet of water was in rather a demoralized condition, the hired men not being adepts in fish-raising and proper drainage. Mrs. Maynard looked at it regretfully; the master hand was absent, and everything was going to rack and ruin.

But who was coming along the well-beaten path from the station? Her eyes were dim with tears, and she brushed them hastily away that she might see more distinctly. It was not the farm hand, that handsome, manly figure walking so erectly, but Mark, her son, and with a glad cry and outstretched hands she hurried to meet him.

“Mother, are you pleased to see me?”

“I am delighted!” she answered, with a burst of happy tears. “Mark, we need you here so much!”

“Are you in trouble, mother?”

He asked for the news as quietly as he could, yet noted with pain the traces of care on that once haughty face, and the sharp outlines which were before almost girlishly rounded.

Mrs. Maynard shrank as from a blow at his kindly question and answered evasively, all the time hurrying him toward the house. Alice came to meet them, and greeted Mark lovingly. But something was missing; what was it? He looked around the old familiar room and thought of Candice regretfully.

“Mother, where is Leta, that she does not bid me welcome home?”

Mrs. Maynard motioned Alice to leave the room, and when they were alone told him all. He listened like one dazed. First wife, then sister! Surely it was more than he could endure. He questioned his mother calmly even to the minutest item, and then rose from his chair hurriedly.

“Where are you going, Mark? What are you going to do?” Mrs. Maynard asked, anxiously, as Mark once more donned his hat and took up his traveling valise.

“I am going to find Leta and bring her home, mother! If this thing is true that gossip reports and the man calling himself Leon Tatro has ruined my sister’s life, one of us must die!”

“Mark, my son, do nothing rashly!” She was in front of him now, clinging to his firm white hands helplessly. “Remember, Mark, Alice and you are all I have left in this wide world! In the heat of anger don’t

endanger your life, but think of your old mother, waiting for you at home!"

"I will do nothing rashly, mother, but I will bring Leta to you; and now, mother mine, am I not a six-footer and able to take care of myself? So don't worry over me, and good-bye!" He imprinted a kiss on her trembling lips and was gone.

The train for Chicago was due in a few minutes, and with long, rapid strides he hurried toward the station. The ticket agent glanced up wonderingly at his re-appearance; Mark merely nodded to him in recognition, and, seating himself on one of the hard, wooden benches, eagerly awaited the train's arrival.

Soon he was speeding back over the same road he had just traveled, speeding onward with one thought, and that the rescue of his sister Leta.

Such a home-coming! Would it be another fruitless search? Was Leta lost to them, gone like Candice out of their lives forever? Then his mind reverted to the evening before.

What would Mrs. Lee think of him after his avowal and his disappearance before he had heard the explanation she had promised to give him? He recalled it all: their quiet chat together by the fireside; her timid admission that she cared for him; and then the telegram.

“It is just as well,” he thought, moodily. “What right have I to worry her with my troubles? And if it be true that Uncle Sam cares for her, then am I a brute, indeed! Oh! Candice! Candice!”

CHAPTER XXI.

WAITING.

Among the crowd with busy feet,
My eye seeks one it cannot find.
While others haste their friends to greet,
Why, why is he so long behind?

—*Hannah F. Gould.*

CANDICE anxiously awaited Mark's appearance at the breakfast table the next morning, but he did not appear. Uncle Sam watched her with a merry twinkle in his eyes, and noted her eager, questioning glances with a smile.

"Who are you waiting for, Candice?" he asked, carelessly.

Candice started half guiltily from her expectant attitude and poured out the hot, steaming coffee so recklessly that the cup and saucer both overflowed.

"You're getting generous, my dear," Uncle

Sam said, laughing good-naturedly; "that will do, never mind," he continued, as she reached for another cup and saucer. "By the way," the old man remarked, after a slight pause, "my nephew was called home last night quite suddenly by a telegram. Kezia is getting anxious about him, I suppose."

"You are sure it is nothing else, uncle? You are keeping nothing worse from me?"

"Of course not, child. Why should I keep bad news from you? The boy thought he had better go, that is all."

That was all! but was it not enough to forego the explanation she had intended making? She could scarcely keep the tears from her eyes during the meal, and was glad when it was over that she might return to her room to indulge in the luxury of a good fit of weeping.

"What oo cryin' for, mamma? Don't oo know I'se dood?" said little Mark, looking at her with a suspicious moisture in his own eyes.

Candice only wept the more at his childish attempts to soothe her.

“Oh! baby! baby!” she exclaimed, passionately, straining him to her heart. “If papa could only know how we love him!”

“Don’t oo cry any more,” Baby Mark replied, lovingly, winding his chubby arms about her neck. “I’ll be big ’fore long, then I’ll be oo papa, and oo’l be my own bu’ful mamma, won’t oo?”

“Yes, darling!” Candice answered, smiling. “When you get big you’ll take care of mamma, won’t you?”

“Oo bet!” said the little fellow, with such a look of eager expectation on his infantile features that Candice laughed heartily at his quaint remarks, and for a short time at least the storm was over. She tried to think it would be only a brief period before Mark would return, but days passed in rapid succession and still no tidings came from Valley Farm. Then pride once more came to the rescue. “He cares no more for Mrs. Lee than for the Candice of old,” she thought, and she would look for him no longer. He had not changed for the better,

but still delighted in winning women's hearts to break them! He was not worth a thought; yet, all the same, her mind dwelt upon him more than she would acknowledge, even to herself.

"Candice, Mark is in town," Uncle Sam told her, in a very matter-of-fact tone.

"Indeed!" She tried to answer quietly, but her heart was palpitating at the news, although she did not vouchsafe another word.

"I invited him up; he is stopping at the Denison, I believe."

"My regard for Mr. Mark Maynard is so slight that I do not wish to see him again!" Candice replied, passionately.

"Tush, tush, child! don't get excited! I'm sure the lad means well; and just now he looks in need of all our sympathy. What the trouble is I cannot imagine. He said he was here on business and had no time to come to the house."

"I am glad of it!" Candice returned, almost spitefully. She thought he might have spared her his roundabout explanation and told the truth. He did not care to come!

“You are getting cynical, my dear ; you need company to enliven you,” Uncle Sam said, cheerily. “There’s nothing like society for the young.”

That evening Uncle Sam was delighted to find Candice entertaining company in the parlor on his return home, after visiting the hotel on a fruitless search for his nephew.

“Mrs. Chamberlain, my guardian, Mr. Desbro,” and Uncle Sam found himself bowing politely before the dashing widow.

“I regret that I did not make an earlier call,” the lady said, laughingly, “but I am always a laggard in forming new friendships. You will forgive me, will you not?” with a glance at Uncle Sam’s face meant to be very coy and charming.

“That’s all right,” Uncle Sam said, bluntly. “The old adage fits very well in this case, for it’s ‘better late than never,’ and I think a little company might do Mrs. Lee a power of good.”

“Being near neighbors, I hope we will see much of each other,” Mrs. Chamberlain said,

graciously, but whether Mrs. Lee or Uncle Sam was meant it was hard to determine. Uncle Sam was no society man, and he met her advances coolly enough. As soon as she had departed, Candice said, merrily:

“Uncle Sam, I believe you’ve made what the vulgar call a mash!”

“A what?” Uncle Sam asked, wonderingly.

Candice laughed gayly at his perplexity.

Uncle Sam was astounded. What had he done? He looked so comical in his bewilderment that Candice said:

“Why, Uncle Sam, don’t you know? Mrs. Chamberlain has fallen in love with you!”

“Oh! what foolishness!” Uncle Sam answered, testily. “What attractions can a decent-looking woman see in an old foggy like myself?”

“If she could see you with my eyes,” Candice said, warmly, “she would acknowledge you to be the dearest man in the world, uncle, if not the youngest and most handsome!”

“Flatterer!” he replied. “You will spoil me

entirely! I shall begin to think I'm a second Apollo! I guess that's the right name, is it not, Candice, for the handsomest man in the world?"

That night Candice was restless. She tossed from side to side on her pillow, and sleep refused to come to her weary eyelids. Life seemed so long to this poor girl, so unutterably long and dreary without the sunshine of love to light her way! At last she arose from the bed and, throwing a black zephyr shawl about her shoulders, seated herself by the window, where the cold rays of the moon, playing hide and seek among the whispering leaves of the tree-tops, touched the window-panes with silvery brightness.

Candice's face shone pale and beautiful as the flickering, dancing moonbeams crowned her with a halo like some fair, pictured saint. The lines about her mouth were tightly drawn as memories of the past came thronging to her. Was it not terrible that she should suffer so cruelly for wrongs done by others?

Hark! what was that? A muffled, fumbly noise outside her chamber door! Some one tried to open it, but it was locked on the inside. Who could it be?

A low voice whispered: "Miss Candice!"

"Is that you, Katie?" asked Candice, as she crossed the room rapidly to open the door. "What in the world is the matter?"

The girl came hurriedly into the room, and sank trembling on a chair.

"Is little Mark sick?" continued Candice; "tell me, Katie, quickly what is the matter!"

Katie strove to compose herself sufficiently to speak, and in a terrified whisper at last said, warningly:

"Hush, Miss Candice! They might kill us if they heard! Something must be done!"

"Tell me what is the matter, Katie! Can you not see you are frightening me nearly to death?"

"Sh! sh! Miss Candice! Spake softly like, or the divils will overhear us shure!"

"Who will overhear us, Katie? Answer me!"

Candice took the quivering girl by the shoulders and shook her as hard as she could with her trembling hands.

“Bugglers are in the house, Miss Candice!” whispered Katie. “They’re in the lib’ry now! Shure, what can we do agin two men!”

“You are sure there are only two, Katie?”

“Faith, and ain’t that enough, Miss Candice?—two men prowlin’ around in the dead of night!”

Candice opened her chamber door to listen, and Katie, seeing her mistress so composed, tip-toed close at her side.

Yes! there was surely some one in the library! If they descended the front stairs the robbers would hear them and doubtless make good their escape. There was a back staircase, and scarcely knowing what she intended to do, Candice beckoned Katie to follow her. Softly the trembling girls stole down to the dining-room and into the kitchen. Unbolting the door, Candice looked out into the darkness, but no one was in sight. Down the street she heard the measured tramp, tramp of a night watchman.

“Katie,” Candice said, hurriedly, “run for your life and summon help! Call the policeman and have him bring assistance; I will wait for you here.”

Quick as a flash Katie was off. Her Irish wit had grasped the situation, and as noiselessly as a shadow she moved down the deserted street.

Candice, cowering beside the door, waiting for help, was in an agony of apprehension. Suppose Uncle Sam should awaken and, hearing an unusual noise in the front part of the house, attempt to investigate the cause of it? Hot-headed as any youth, he would not stand tamely by and permit the rascals to walk off with their booty. She knew his money and valuable papers were in the library, and if he should go there she feared for his life. Oh! heavens! would Katie never come back!

Silently as the fabled ghosts of old, dark figures moved up the street and paused at the door where Candice was waiting so impatiently. She saw their badges glistening in the moonlight and knew that help had come. Surely Katie had fulfilled her mission faithfully.

With trembling steps and wildly-beating heart Candice, without a word, beckoned them to follow her. Up the little back staircase they filed, and then stood for a moment listening. Noises, though slight, were still heard in the library, and cautiously the men descended the stairs, pausing at the library door.

“Trapped!” cried a man’s voice, angrily, and then all was noise and confusion.

CHAPTER XXII.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS.

MRS. MAYNARD waited impatiently for a message from Mark, but none arrived. When Saturday evening came he made his appearance, looking haggard and wan.

“What news?” Mrs. Maynard’s lips framed the question and Mark answered, sadly:

“None!”

Alice waited anxiously until he should tell them of his quest, but he seemed strangely reticent, as if he feared to wound them by any allusion to their trouble.

The following week Mark remained at home and gathered together every fragment of matter that had the slightest bearing on the case constantly in his thoughts.

The watchman, still far from well, willingly

gave his mite of information. The robber, he said, was tall and dark. He wore a diamond ring on one of his fingers, for he had seen it sparkle in the moonlight when the murderous blow was descending that nearly deprived him of life.

Mark then visited Mrs. Levy, and that obliging lady received him with considerable astonishment. He led her to talk of the current society gossip, but what did he care if Miss Araminta Smith was going to marry the Right Honorable Mr. O'Neil, or that she had ordered her trousseau direct from the great man-milliner Worth? What did Mark care if Mrs. Levy's crazy patchwork had taken the premium at seven different fairs?

At last a more interesting subject was broached. Mrs. Levy's pet hobby was diamonds, and by dint of coaxing, storming and cajoling, she had finally succeeded in inducing her liege lord to purchase her a set, consisting of ear-rings, a pin and a ring, of which she was foolishly proud, displaying them on every occasion. Mark, know-

ing her weakness, commenced praising them extravagantly.

“My ring is nothing compared to Mr. Tatro’s,” Mrs. Levy said, with a little regretful sigh; “the diamond in his was as large as three or four of mine. If I only had that ring—”

But Mark had heard all he wished to hear, and was rising from his chair.

“What! are you going so soon? I am so sorry! Let me order wine and cake, will you not?”

“No, thanks. I am in a hurry and cannot wait. Good morning, Mrs. Levy.” That worthy lady was highly incensed at the abruptness of her visitor’s departure, but Mark had found out all he wished to know. Leon Tatro and the bank robber were one, at least that was the conclusion he had arrived at, and he thought bitterly how easily some people were duped by a good-looking young stranger.

Mark was restless again and anxious to be up and doing. Once more he traveled toward the Queen City in quest of his sister.

He felt an intense longing to see Mrs. Lee, but knew the meeting could only be productive of misery to them both.

He met his Uncle Sam one day, but shrank from telling him of the additional trouble at home. If he could only find Leta honorably married, his mind would be at rest, but if she should be dragged down to the depths of infamy, perhaps broken-hearted and deserted, then he would take her quietly home, and no one should be the wiser.

“If I could only find her,” was the constant burden of his thoughts. Passing along the street one evening, a woman hurried by him; he started eagerly forward, for the profile turned toward him timidly was surely that of his lost sister, Leta!

Too dazed to speak, he hurried after her, but the crowd surged between them, and he lost sight of the dark-robed figure. On, on, he went, with eager eyes, but she had vanished completely. No, there she was again, standing in front of one of the windows of a huge fancy

goods store. The glare of the electric lights almost blinded him for a few minutes, but hurrying forward he peered at her excitedly.

Thank God! that brazen-faced, bedizzened wreck was not Leta! She glanced at him with words of blasphemy upon her lips. Mark turned shudderingly away. Accustomed as he was to scenes of all descriptions, he could not bear to look upon this wreck of womankind.

That he had seen Leta and had again lost her in the crowd he was confident. Disappointed, he wandered away from the crowded thoroughfare, where the passers-by jostled each other as they hurried along.

All trace of Leta was now gone, and Mark returned to his hotel sad and dispirited; but he had found a clue, and Leta was surely in the city; there was some consolation in that.

“LETA: Let me hear from you. MARK.”

This advertisement appeared in the columns of the morning papers a few days afterwards.

Candice saw it and noted the names carelessly; it was a coincidence, nothing more; then she passed on to items of greater interest, never dreaming that Mark, her husband, was the advertiser, or Leta the haughty girl of long ago!

No answer came to Mark's appeal. If Leta was the person he had seen that night, then she was determined to remain undiscovered.

On a stormy night when the wind was blowing a gale and great torrents of rain dashed against the window-panes, Mark exclaimed, as he thrust the poker into the fire savagely: "What a beastly night it is! Yet I am tempted to defy the elements and visit the theatre. Let's see, what is to be played to-night? Ah! yes! Minnie Palmer appears in 'My Sweetheart.' I believe I'll venture!"

Donning his evening suit, with a rubber coat enveloping him completely, he sauntered from the hotel, striving to find relief for a few hours, at least, from his torturing thoughts.

Mark rather enjoyed this war of the elements,

and, with his handsome head bent, went on and on. What a noble young man he seemed! Many a water-soaked mortal gazed after him admiringly, he appeared so supremely unconscious of the disagreeable aspect out-door life presented.

At the theatre all was light and warmth. "Surely the fools are not all dead yet!" Mark thought, grimly, as he made his way through a perfect sea of people.

He was in the parquet, close to the orchestra, which was playing "My Queen." Mark listened until the last notes of the sweet melody melted away; then he raised his eyes and gazed across at the opposite box. Instantly the look of ennui left his face, and he arose eagerly, but again resumed his seat when he saw he had not been observed by the person who was enchaining his attention so completely that he barely noticed the favorite star when she came bounding on the stage.

In robes of some sheeny fabric of delicate azure hue and with a dainty bonnet of the

same color, sprinkled here and there with pearls, sat Mrs. Lee. Girlishly fair she looked, and from his seat at the opposite side of the building it seemed to Mark as if his young girl-wife was before him. Uncle Sam was with her, but who was the neatly attired woman in widow's weeds, who seemed to be of the same party?

"Mrs. Lee has discarded mourning," he thought, bitterly. "Perhaps the rumors are true, after all, and Uncle Sam will soon lead her to the altar." The idea was torture to him, and he turned his head away, determined not to feast his eyes on the loveliness that could never be his. But try as he would to confine his attention to the stage and the charming little actress, it was of no avail. His thoughts would wander to the occupants of the box across the way, and his eyes would involuntarily seek the fair face of Mrs. Lee.

"Bless my soul! there's Mark!" Uncle Sam exclaimed, as he saw his nephew gazing directly at him. "Candice, have you noticed Mark in the parquet? I shall sign to him to come here,

and then I'll make the young fellow give an account of himself! A pretty way this is for him to use his old uncle!"

"Uncle Sam," Candice said, pleadingly, "for my sake let him alone. Do not ask him a single question. If he does not want to come to us, why should we care?" There was a quiver of pain in the sweet young voice.

But Uncle Sam had already made the sign, and Mark was on his way to the box.

Candice felt a thrill of pride as she gazed at his erect carriage and blonde head held proudly; he was her husband, her own; and yet she must treat him like the veriest stranger!

Mrs. Chamberlain was introduced, and the fair Minnie Palmer warbled her sweetest, but Mark had eyes only for one fair face, the face of Mrs. Lee. When they separated that night, Mark had promised his uncle to make an early call.

CHAPTER XXIII.

“MY LOVE! MY WIFE!”

WHEN the word “Trapped!” fell on Candice’s listening ear, her composure deserted her and she sank on the landing, completely unnerved, but entirely conscious of all that was going on below. At first there was noise and confusion, and then two pistol shots rang out on the quiet midnight air.

“What in God’s name is the matter?”

Uncle Sam, in his long white night-shirt, looked like the ghost of Hamlet’s father; but the ludicrous aspect he presented was unnoticed, and the astonished old gentleman was too much amazed to give a thought to his appearance as he hastily descended the stairs. He had been awakened by the strange noises and the report of the fire-arms. The

library door was open, and the first glance told him what had happened.

Several policemen were struggling with what seemed to be a raging maniac, while one man lay handcuffed on the floor. In a few minutes that appeared like ages the second ruffian was conquered; the handcuffs closed on his wrists with a sharp click, and the midnight robbers were prisoners.

"We arrived just in the nick of time, sir," a burly policeman said, espying Uncle Sam in the doorway. "Pretty Jim is a slippery un, but he's fast enough now!"

The servants were hurrying hither and thither and the house was in a perfect whirl of excitement. One of the robbers was wounded, and it was thought dangerously, so, while his companion in crime was being marched off to the police station, a physician was summoned.

Katie was found on the upper landing, weeping over her young mistress, who had fainted, and declaring that she was "kilt intirely." She grew nearly wild with joy when Candice regained consciousness.

After the excitement had somewhat subsided and Uncle Sam had changed his night robe for more suitable attire, he returned to the room in which the dying man lay. The wretch was fast approaching dissolution, and in his delirium he cried out, passionately: “My darling! my wife! Oh! Leta, come to me!”

“Surely this man was made for better things,” Uncle Sam thought, as he gazed at the handsome face and manly form of the robber, but little did he dream it was for his own niece, Leta Maynard, the scoundrel was calling so wildly!

When the physician arrived and examined the man, he said he was beyond reach of medical aid, and that it would be inhuman to remove him to the police station. Candice, pitying him in her innocent heart, strove to allay his suffering.

“Are you Leta?” he asked her, in a faint voice, as she bent over him. “Oh! yes! I know you are Leta, only your hair is dark, while my darling’s is like spun gold!”

No need for handcuffs now! He would

never commit another crime! "Pretty Jim" the policemen called him. He had been a "shady" character for years, a leader in shrewd confidence games and the principal in many daring robberies.

Mark, opening his paper the following morning, saw an account of the attempted burglary, and at once hastened to his uncle's residence. He followed Mrs. Lee into the room where the wounded robber lay; at the first glance he started back amazed. Could that noble-looking man be a common housebreaker? "What strange freaks nature sometimes indulges in!" he thought. "There is a rascal of the first water with the face of a prince!" So lost in reverie was Mark that when Mrs. Lee spoke to him softly and hastened from the room, he scarcely heeded her departure.

What was the dying man muttering? Mark bent his head and listened with eager attention, for he was certain his lips had murmured the name of Leta!

"Am I dying?" the man asked, abruptly.

“I fear you are, my poor fellow,” Mark answered.

Raising himself from the bed, the robber looked eagerly into Mark's face.

“You are an honest man,” he said, gloomily. “Once I was so, too! Do you believe me?”

“I do,” Mark answered earnestly, and his tone carried conviction with it.

“Then, for what I have been, will you do me a favor?”

“I will,” Mark said, solemnly.

As if a reaction had come, the man sank wearily on his pillow. Was he going to die without another word? No; his eyes suddenly opened again; they were full of tears.

“Shall I send for a minister?” Mark asked.

“No! no!” the man replied, vehemently. He raised one hand to his brow and pushed back the heavy masses of dark hair as if their weight oppressed him; as he did so, Mark noticed, with a start, a magnificent diamond ring sparkling on the robber's finger.

“An heirloom,” he said, noting Mark's linger-

ing gaze. "Will you remove it for me and when I am dead take it, with the papers you will find in my inside coat-pocket, to the person to whom they are addressed?"

"I will do as you wish," Mark answered.

If Candice's husband was to find out if the man before him was indeed Leon Tatro, he must do it at once.

"Will you tell me who Leta is?" he asked, placing his mouth close to the dying man's ear.

As if that name had power to call him back to life from death, his eyes opened, and "Leta, my love! my wife!" issued from his lips. The words floated out with his last breath, and he was gone.

Mark took the ring from his finger and the packet of papers from his pocket as he had promised. He looked with curiosity at the packet; it was addressed to "The Countess Lucerne," and inside the larger envelope, which was unsealed, was a sealed package. Mechanically Mark drew this out; when he glanced at the address upon it he uttered an exclamation of

joy, for the name “Leta Maynard Tatro” stood out before his eyes! Again he looked. Ah! yes! the street and number of the house were there too—a little, unfashionable street, far away from the crowded thoroughfares.

Even though his sister was this outlaw’s wife, Mark was conscious of a feeling of thankfulness that she was wedded; but still the matter must be kept a secret; Leta’s name must not be coupled with that of a double-dyed ruffian.

Buttoning his coat carefully over the precious package, Mark noiselessly quitted the room. Mrs. Lee was in the act of entering, but he motioned her back.

“Is he dead?” she asked.

“Yes,” Mark answered, as he signed to the policeman, who was keeping guard outside the door, to enter.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A WIFE'S DEVOTION.

THE robber was dead, and the law had no further hold upon him. After the usual preliminaries, Mark bought a lot in the cemetery and furnished money for a respectable burial; then his mind was easier, for although the world might call him Quixotic, he felt in his heart that his sister's husband ought to have decent interment.

Candice had noted his action wonderingly. What did he mean by such a peculiar freak? She liked him the better for it, however. After all, she could not feel as angry with him as she wished, and was tempted to think more leniently of his numerous shortcomings. He had never referred to their conversation on that night when he had told her he loved her and

she had acknowledged her regard for him, but had ignored it completely. Well, life is made up of disappointments and heartaches, with sunshine and happiness scattered here and there!

Mark was a constant study to her. Sometimes she was tempted to forgive him and confess her identity; then the reaction would come and she would turn from him almost angrily.

Mark was pained at her conduct, and, thinking this life a strange enigma and the people in the world the greatest puzzle of all, he started out in quest of Leta. He went to the address inscribed on the package, but the landlady of the cheap boarding-house informed him carelessly that Mrs. Tatro had left there two days before.

"Do you know where she went?" Mark asked, trying to speak indifferently.

"No, I don't," the landlady answered, sharply. Then he turned away, disheartened at meeting with disappointment where he had only thought of success. But if his sister was in the city he would surely find her. He could not, would not rest until he had accomplished his purpose.

That evening he was wandering aimlessly along, thinking sadly of his mother and Alice. Surely this life of his was bad enough, but was not theirs, waiting at Valley Farm, even worse? He could not tell what induced him to traverse the part of the town into which he had wandered, but on he went until a light across the way attracted his attention, and just where it shone brightly on the grass-grown walk of a brick mansion illuminated as if for some grand ball, a woman was standing quietly, as if waiting for some one, but no one came; the woman moved restlessly, and then seemed gazing straight into that festively lighted house.

Mark could not tell why he stood like one under a spell and followed that woman's every motion, for surely the picture on which he was gazing was one of every-day occurrence. Now, right under the chandelier in that richly appointed room, a young girl was standing with her head bent, listening; she, too, was waiting—for what?

A handsome young man entered the room,

went close up to the waiting girl and kissed her softly on the brow; then, with one arm about her waist, they sauntered back among the shadows. At this Mark saw the waiting, eager face of the woman outside droop as if in despair; then she threw her arms above her head and noiselessly fell prone on the greensward.

"She has fainted," Mark thought, pityingly, and hurrying across the street with long, rapid strides he bent over the woman's prostrate form. One glance at the white face upturned to him was enough and, with the words, "My God! it is Leta!" he gathered the frail young figure in his arms; her long golden hair had become unloosed, and was floating over his shoulders wildly. But it was Leta, his sister, found at last! Thank Heaven for that! and he kissed her pale lips.

She lay insensible in his arms. Then a terrible idea came to him. Suppose she was dead? The thought was agony. At length she stirred; she was alive, thank God! and with tears in his eyes he awaited her return to consciousness.

The blue eyes opened at last, and the white lips murmured, "Leon;" then Mark spoke to her.

"Do you feel better, dear Leta?" he said.

"Oh! yes!" she answered, sadly; "but I am weary, so very weary! I believe I have walked a hundred miles to-day!"

"I know, dear," Mark said, tenderly, fearing to startle her, and with his arm encircling her waist he led her slowly along the street.

"Where are we going, Leon?"

They were threading the crowded thoroughfare and Mark did not answer, for Mrs. Lee, on the arm of Uncle Sam, was approaching them. Leta's face was almost hidden on her brother's shoulder, and Candice failed to recognize the girl. She only knew that Mark, her husband, who had shunned her so persistently, was there, face to face with her, with a young girl leaning on him confidingly, his arm encircling her waist.

Uncle Sam had not noticed him at all, and Candice turned from Mark with such a look of scorn in her wine-brown eyes as rarely visited

their limpid depths. But her glasses hid it. Mark had only time to notice the haughty head raised proudly as she passed by, giving him no glance of recognition.

"A dead cut!" he thought, bitterly, as he strove to steady Leta's steps.

Mark took his sister to a quiet boarding-house, engaged rooms, and never left her through all the long hours of the night. He made her take nourishment, and she obeyed him like a child, but beyond a start of surprise when she saw that it was Mark and not Leon who had brought her there, she made no sign.

It was true then, all that she had read in the papers. Leon Tatro, her husband, was a thief, a midnight robber, and he was dead! She had thought it was false, and that Leon had found her on the street, but now she knew it was Mark, her brother, who looked at her with kind, pitying eyes that burned into her very brain.

"Let me think," she said, wearily, when Mark addressed her, and he, fearing for her overtasked brain, stole quietly out to obtain for

her a composing draught at the nearest drug store.

On his return he found her still sitting where he had left her, with a drawn look on her face, and without a tear to dim the sparkle of her eyes that seemed unnaturally large and bright.

"Leta, sister, take this for me, dear!" Mark said, and she swallowed the draught without seeming to realize what she was doing; he then went in search of assistance and one of the landlady's daughters offered her services. Mark, thinking it would be best, explained to her as far as he dare his sister's sad condition, and tears stood in his listener's eyes when he had finished. He told her Leta had lost her husband very recently, and was nearly crazed by grief. He had done all he could for her, and what she needed now was rest. If she could sleep, it would be better for her, much better.

So the good-hearted daughter disrobed and put Leta in bed, where she soon sank into a refreshing sleep. The soothing draught had taken effect, and Mark coming in later took

his seat by the bedside, to watch over her through the night. The landlady's daughter, a blooming young girl, who had been much impressed by Mark's gentlemanly address, busied herself about the room for a few moments, every now and then stealing a furtive glance at the manly form and handsome face of the sufferer's brother. But Mark scarcely noticed her, and with a sigh she told him to call her if she was needed. He thanked her for her kind ministrations, and she left the room.

Through the long watches of the night Mark kept his place by Leta's bedside; the weather was cold and dreary now, and he felt chilled and uncomfortable; still he did not stir for fear of startling the sleeping girl.

When the first gray streaks of morning dawned, Mark bent over her uneasily. Was she slumbering yet? No! the blue eyes were wide open, and she gazed lovingly into his face. Throwing her arms about his neck, she drew the handsome blonde head, so nearly

resembling her own, close down to her and kissed it passionately.

"Oh! Mark! Mark!" she moaned, with a little, sobbing cry, and then a great storm of emotion shook her like a leaf in the gale. Mark felt the warm tears coursing down the delicate cheek laid so close against his own, and knew that she was weeping.

"It will do her good," he thought, as he held her in his strong, loving arms. Leta grew more composed at last and said, sadly:

"You must despise me, Mark!"

"No! no! Leta!" he answered, tenderly; "and the folks at home still love you dearly!"

"And I have wronged them so cruelly!" she said, scarcely above a whisper.

"It is all over now, dear," Mark replied, "and you will go home with me; mother is waiting for us."

"I cannot! Do not ask me!" she exclaimed. "After a time, perhaps, I may forget; until then, brother, I am afraid I will be a sore trouble to you."

"I guess I can survive it!" Mark answered, quietly, and then tried to turn her attention to other things; he succeeded better than he anticipated.

Finding her quite calm at last, he left her in order to make some further arrangements for her comfort, but hurried first directly to his hotel, to write a long letter to his mother. He wrote tenderly of his erring sister, but stated that the time of their return was very indefinite.

"Do not worry, mother," he said in conclusion; "I will take care of Leta, and when she is over the bitterest part of her grief and mortification, I will bring her home to you. I know you are impatient, mother, and this waiting is very hard, but look hopefully forward to what the future will surely bring."

The letter finished, he posted it, and, thinking Leta would be best left alone for a short time, sauntered toward his Uncle Sam's residence. The old gentleman met him cordially. Mark soon knew that his uncle had not recognized

him the night before, and was g'lad, for it would save all embarrassing explanations. He asked for Mrs. Lee in a careless, every-day tone, and his uncle rang the bell, requesting her presence. But Candice had noted Mark's approach from her window, which overlooked the street, and with the memory of the past night's scene still rankling in her breast, she sent down word she was indisposed, and they would please excuse her.

Mark knew it was but a subterfuge to escape his presence, but Uncle Sam in his kind old heart wondered what in the world ailed her. "She was well enough this morning," he said, musingly; "she must have been suddenly attacked."

"I guess she is not dangerously ill," Mark answered, gloomily. "It strikes me, uncle, she will be all right after my departure!"

Uncle Sam looked up quickly, comprehending that something had once more come between the two whom he would give half his fortune to see reconciled.

"Why fight against fate?" Mark said to himself, bitterly, on his way to the house where Leta lodged. "Surely Mrs. Lee can never be more to me than she is now!"

But nevertheless he continued to think of Mrs. Lee, and her treatment of him made him unutterably miserable.

CHAPTER XXV.

AN HONORABLE NAME.

THE days that followed were vexatious to Mark. Part of the time Leta would throw off her sorrow and appear almost cheerful; then the old melancholy would reassert itself, and she would spend hours brooding over and bewailing her wasted life. Mark, finding her one day in an easy frame of mind, gave her the packet of letters and the ring, and then, with great pity for her in his kind blue eyes, told her of the death of the man she had called her husband.

Leta listened silently; taking the package of papers from his hands she looked them over carelessly and then handed them back to him. What did it all mean? She could not understand it. Why was so much about the "Countess Lucerne" written on them all?

Mark read them carefully, and as he read the interest they inspired showed itself on his handsome face.

“Leta,” he said at last, “although your husband died an outlaw’s death, there are extenuating circumstances. When very young he was led into crime by one much older than himself; he fled to this country for safety, but his evil genius followed him here, and he plunged deeper and deeper into sin until he perpetrated the daring act of burglary that ended his career. But, sister,” and Mark straightened up his form proudly, “for all his misdeeds he has left you an honorable name, thank Heaven! These papers prove your right beyond dispute to the title of Countess Lucerne. They speak of an estate in France. Some time we will investigate it thoroughly. Until then, Leta, be satisfied that the name you will hereafter bear is an honorable one, and unknown to the police record!”

After that Mark always addressed her as “Mrs. Lucerne,” and she was better satisfied,

as the name did not recall so forcibly the cause of her unhappy position. She had loved her husband dearly, thinking him noble and good, and now that he was dead, she pitied him that the life begun so auspiciously should have ended in shame. And he had loved her, too, for even at the last he tried to guard her from the consequences of his reckless acts. What might he not have made of that life if he had tried! But instead he had gone recklessly on, inviting his own destruction.

Finding Leta had determined not to return to Valley Farm, after urging her repeatedly, Mark gave up the task as hopeless, and waited patiently for the time when she would consent to go of her own free will.

"I cannot bear to meet them yet," she said, pleadingly, in answer to all Mark's anxious questionings, and he was forced to be content.

Alice and Mrs. Maynard wrote tender, entreating letters for the absent ones to return, but Leta shrank from the home-returning, the glances of wondering eyes, and the scornful remarks of her

acquaintances as from a pestilence, and Mark, knowing by experience that heart-wounds, though hard to bear at first, grow gradually less painful as time elapses, bore with her patiently.

One evening the brother and sister were sitting together, talking quietly. Again winter winds whistled and moaned around the house corners. They had found this boarding-house very comfortable indeed, and still stayed on, never thinking of changing. The gas was lighted, and Mark was gazing lazily at the glowing embers in the grate, with his face turned toward the window.

Leta was directly opposite him, toying absently with the leaves of a new magazine Mark had just brought home to her, hoping to wean her from thoughts of other things. She was rapidly learning to be content, if not happy; and Mark hoped he would soon be able to take her home to Valley Farm, there to complete the lesson of forgetfulness, if that were possible.

“Mark,” Leta said, in a hesitating tone, as if

she dreaded giving pain, for she had borne so much lately herself that she was beginning to be very tender of others' feelings, "Mark, have you ever heard from Candice?"

"No, Leta, never!" Mark answered, his voice unsteady with emotion. "Whether she is living or dead I know not!"

"Forgive me, brother, I did not mean to pain you," Leta continued, "but you will find her some day I am sure."

"If I could only think so!" Mark answered, sadly. "I am afraid my sweet girl-wife will never know how bitterly I regret the past! Leta, these lines are always ringing in my ears and haunting me:

"If I could live my life again,
And know what I do now,
Full many a word would be unsaid—
And never a broken vow!"

"But we cannot live our lives again, sister. I suppose the wrong I did, half in thoughtlessness, will be always written against me, for I cannot wipe it out. I have repented bitterly long ago,

but that can do no good!" Mark's voice died away in silence; Leta rose from her chair and stood behind him, smoothing his curly blonde hair.

Was it fate that, just at that moment, Candice and Mrs. Chamberlain, returning from a charitable visit and attracted by the appearance of the group within, should stand an instant in the street to gaze into that cosy little room? It was only for a second; then Candice clutched her companion's arm nervously and hurried her on, for the sight that had greeted the poor wife's eyes had caused the warm life blood to almost congeal about her heart, and she felt as if she must faint if she remained longer.

Surely there was nothing in that quiet home scene to occasion so much distress in her friend, Mrs. Chamberlain thought.

A handsome young man, in dressing-gown and slippers, sitting before the fire, seemingly content with his surroundings, and by his side, with one hand toying with his short curly locks, a young girl standing. Her face was in the shadow, and

all they could see was a delicate profile and masses of golden hair coiled high on the head. A quiet home scene, nothing more, and Mrs. Chamberlain gazed on it with a smile wreathing her lips. "A trifle spoony!" she said, with a light laugh, as Candice hurried her along. "Not yet over the honeymoon by all appearances!" Her companion uttered not a word.

Mrs. Chamberlain wondered why Mrs. Lee had so little to say the rest of the way home. She did not know it was an effort for her companion to utter the merest trifle.

At last home was reached, good-night said, and Candice was left alone, to brood over the scene she had just witnessed. Uncle Sam had retired, and she hurried to her own chamber and locked herself in.

She heard Baby Mark in the room across the hall talking to Katie gayly; she did not go to him, but only put her hand to her head as if the shrill treble voice worried her. She did not weep, but sat there and thought what did it all mean? How could Mark marry again, not

knowing whether his girl-wife was living or dead? If it was not his wife, who then was that golden-haired girl she had seen him with now for the second time? When morning dawned she had not closed her eyes in sleep, and looked haggard and wan.

Uncle Sam asked her kindly if she was ill, and she answered, "I have a headache, that is all." He thought to himself if she had said heart-ache she would have come nearer the truth.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"TOO OLD TO LOVE, TOO YOUNG TO MARRY!"

MRS. CHAMBERLAIN was a constant visitor at the brown-stone mansion, but whether Uncle Sam or Mrs. Lee was the attraction was difficult to discover.

"Being such near neighbors, my dear," the lady said, gushingly, to Candice one day, "we ought to be very friendly;" and as if only friendliness for her neighbors prompted her actions, she commenced trying to enliven them. Euchre parties were very fashionable just then, and Mrs. Chamberlain persuaded Uncle Sam and Mrs. Lee to attend several. Candice shrank from it, but Uncle Sam loved a quiet game and attended willingly. At last the gatherings at Mrs. Chamberlain's house, which at first had consisted of several persons, dwindled

down to Mrs. Chamberlain's half-grown daughter, herself, Uncle Sam and Candice.

At first Candice went, thinking to please her uncle, but after awhile she commenced making excuses and staid at home, and Uncle Sam rather unwillingly went without her.

Mrs. Chamberlain was a good-looking woman, just in the prime of life, well preserved, but rather too portly to be graceful. She had been a widow over three years, and was not at all averse to marrying again. Samuel Desbro was somewhat older than she desired, but rich and influential. Why should she not win him? So by every art in her power she tried to enslave this man “wi’ the lint white locks.”

Uncle Sam was certainly very obtuse, for he would not even meet the widow's advances half way, and she almost cried with vexation to see her most telling speeches utterly ignored or answered so indifferently that she was sure he did not understand them.

Poor Uncle Sam! he had no more idea at first of Mrs. Chamberlain's designs than he had of

Candice running off with the coachman, but when, at last, her conduct grew so plainly apparent his old eyes twinkled merrily.

She invited them over to tea one evening, but little Mark was not feeling very well, and therefore, as quickly as politeness would permit, Candice hurried home to her boy, and Uncle Sam and the bewitching widow were left alone. Now was her time, Mrs. Chamberlain thought, complacently.

"I wanted to have a little quiet talk with you, Mr. Desbro," she said, trying to look like a bashful schoolgirl. "I have no one to advise me or look out for my interests since dear John died. It's a terrible thing to be a widow, Mr. Desbro, don't you think so?"

"I never was a widow, Mrs. Chamberlain, so I cannot tell from my own experience, but if you say so, then of course it must be so," Uncle Sam answered, quietly, but with a note of mockery in his voice.

"Of course you cannot be expected to know how a widow feels, Mr. Desbro," she said, resign-

edly, "but somehow women always expect to be protected by men; they want advice and—"

"Haven't you a solicitor?" Uncle Sam interrupted, gravely; "they are always willing to advise you, provided their fees are assured!"

"Oh! yes, I have a solicitor, but we women want sympathy, something else besides advice. Mr. Desbro, you were never married or you would understand what I mean. Conjugal happiness is such a sacred thing!"

"Yes, I've heard so," Uncle Sam said, dubiously; "but as to marrying, why I consider myself too old to love, too young to marry! So, you see, Mrs. Chamberlain, my prospects for conjugal happiness are, to say the least of it, rather thin!"

Mrs. Chamberlain turned away in disgust, and Uncle Sam, with a merry twinkle in his eyes, watched her with an expressive shrug of the shoulders.

"A fine woman," he decided, mentally, "but a leetle too much on the marrying order to suit me!"

Mrs. Chamberlain was not yet discouraged. Might he not mean that he was older than herself? With a little laugh meant to make her appear wholly unconcerned, she resumed the conversation:

"You 'too old to love, too young to marry,' Mr. Desbro! Pray, how many men as old as you are commit the folly of marrying nowadays! Love," she continued, a trifle scornfully, "is not supposed to form a part of the contract between people past the prime of life, but sometimes a great deal of happiness is derived from such unions. Age, it is to be hoped, gives us a little quieter view of life, and the couple, that if united when young would quarrel continually, might if married later in life boast of perfect happiness!"

"True enough, Mrs. Chamberlain," Uncle Sam said, quietly, "for those that wish to marry; but, years ago, I loved. It seems strange now, does it not, to hear an old white-haired man talk of loving? But such was the case. I loved a fair young girl and lost her. There is a grave in

my heart and over it a tombstone, the inscription upon which is always fresh in my remembrance: ‘Sacred to the memory of my first love!’ So you see why I do not care to marry!”

Mrs. Chamberlain made no reply, but that moment she gave up all hopes of ever becoming Mrs. Desbro.

“Such folly!” she said, with a forced laugh, as she watched him take his departure. “He is as sentimental as a young man of twenty-one! A grave in his heart, indeed!”

Mrs. Chamberlain tried to appear unconcerned about the matter. She always had a consciousness that Samuel Desbro had understood her purpose perfectly well, and had taken that method to check all further attempts on her part to win him in the future. Despite his unfailing courtesy whenever they met, she felt uncomfortable in his presence and visited the brown-stone house rarely, until at last her visits ceased altogether.

Candice wondered over the change, but said nothing; on the whole she was glad of it, for the gushing widow’s presence had bored her dread-

fully when her heart was sore and oppressed by her own sorrows.

Uncle Sam visited the hotel Mark had first made his stopping-place, but was told that Mr. Maynard had not been there for several weeks. "He has gone home," Uncle Sam decided, mentally, and thinking it might interest Candice, he remarked to her that evening:

"Candice, I visited the Denison this afternoon, and Mark has not been there for several weeks. He has probably gone back to Valley Farm."

Ah! full well Candice knew that he had not, but hated to tell the kind old man how bitterly Mark had deceived them all. She dreaded his just anger at this last evidence of Mark's unworthiness, and even now, in her wifely devotion, kept silent.

Uncle Sam looked at her wonderingly, because she did not evince greater interest in her husband's whereabouts, and then said, half reproachfully:

"Candice, how much longer is this game of cross-purposes to continue?"

"What do you mean, uncle?" The question was only a subterfuge to gain time.

"I mean," the old man answered, sadly, "that even your woman's heart should be satisfied with Mark's conduct by this time; his whole life seems shattered by your loss. Restless and dissatisfied, he is constantly roaming from place to place, seeking happiness but never finding it. Can you not forgive him, my child?"

"Uncle, are you tired of me?" Candice asked, bitterly.

"Why, bless you! no, my dear child! The old man could ill afford to lose his little 'Sister of Charity!' but you cannot always live with me. I am getting old; if I should die, would it not be far better for you to have a husband's protecting care? Besides, my child, you must think of Baby Mark. It is a duty you owe your son!"

"Uncle Sam!" and Candice's tones were oppressed with a weight of sadness. "Kindest and best of uncles, I am afraid I must inflict my presence on you a little longer;

for, dearly as I love my husband, much as I care for baby's future, I would wash for a living, starve on a crust in a garret, rather than acknowledge the pseudo Mrs. Lee to be Mark Maynard's wife!"

"Don't get excited, my dear!" Uncle Sam said, soothingly; "but if, as you say, you love your husband, why do you shut him out from that love?"

How she longed to cry out and tell the story of Mark's unworthiness! But that would never do, for Uncle Sam would then seek him and her identity would be made known. No! no! that would never do! Besides, she must shield him, even though her heart were broken in the effort!

"Think over it, my child," Uncle Sam said, earnestly, "and forgive him if you can!"

"I cannot! oh! I cannot!" she answered, wildly. "Oh! Uncle Sam! always kind and good, do not ask me, for I cannot!"

He did not press the subject further, but wondered what was the matter that these two, loving each so well, should be separated by what seemed to him a woman's foolish whim.

CHAPTER XXVII.

KATIE MAKES A DISCOVERY.

MARK was becoming impatient of this mode of life, and wanted a change. Leta was rapidly regaining her usual spirits, and began to think with something very nearly approaching pleasure of their return to Valley Farm.

Mark, in the long winter evenings that had passed, had planned numerous improvements for the old homestead, and was anxious to be putting his projects into execution. "It will kill time," he thought, moodily; but he was very solicitous for Leta's welfare, and knowing how she longed for and yet dreaded this home-going, he left it all for her to determine. Unfortunately, she could not quite make up her mind, but put it off from day to day

until spring was ushered in, with rough winds and fitful changes of weather.

“We must go some time, I suppose, Mark,” Leta said, sadly, one evening; “but oh! how I dread the torture to which I shall be subjected when our acquaintances discover the reason of my absence from home!”

“Why is it necessary to tell the reason?” Mark said, quietly. “You went away as Leta Maynard, go back the same. Mother has stated you are absent on a visit. Your returning home with me will disarm suspicion.”

“And live a lie the rest of my life!” Leta said, bitterly. “Oh! Mark, I cannot do that!”

“It will only be for a little while, Leta; then we will go abroad, you and I, and investigate that matter mentioned in the papers in your possession. We can be gone two or three years, and if what those documents state be true, you can don your widow’s weeds with your title and return with me to Valley Farm. Then who will dare to point the finger of scorn at you! It will be thought that you were married and widowed

while abroad. You must not let that one mistake cloud your life forever. Sister, will you do as I say?"

"How can I do otherwise, Mark, when you have devised this plan to make my life what it might have been but for my own folly? I will go home when you are ready!"

"Spoken like a sensible girl!" Mark said. "Now, you must go shopping," he continued, as he placed a roll of bills in her lap. Leta said, sorrowfully:

"How can I, Mark?"

"You must, Leta; that is part of the programme. If you return home sad and dark-robed like this, people will look at you askance. You must go bravely, like a soldier to the battlefield, and, sister, don all the war-paint, for good clothes, you know, take a great part in the estimate people make of you."

Leta, knowing in her heart all that Mark said was true, complied with his request, and came back laden with purchases; they were for herself, she told her brother, but in her mind they all had been given to Alice in advance.

Then Mark seemed to grow very worldly in his tastes, and urged Leta to accompany him to various places of amusement, which she did. Mark dreaded, yet longed to meet Mrs. Lee again; he knew it would be much better for him to go away without seeing her, but felt that to meet her and hear her voice once more were pleasures he could not forego. In the theatres and crowded assemblies he searched for her in vain; there was no other way but to call at Uncle Sam's again; possibly she might be "at home" to him, but it was hardly probable after the coolness with which she had treated him when last there.

Determined to make another effort and doubtful as to what his reception would be, Mark found himself ushered into Mrs. Lee's presence, for she had not had time to evade him, as he was sure she would have done if she could have escaped unobserved. She turned at his approach, coldly polite, as to the veriest stranger, and said, pointedly:

"Mr. Desbro is in the library. Shall I tell him you are here?"

She wished to escape from him, Mark thought, but his words were as courteously uttered when he answered as if the bitterest pain was not filling his heart at that moment.

“Can you not spare a few minutes to me?” he asked, pleadingly. “I will not task your patience long, for I return home to Valley Farm in a few days, and, as quickly as I can make arrangements, I shall go abroad again.”

“Indeed!” Candice said, trying to speak calmly, and succeeding so well that her voice sounded harsh and indifferent. “Your resolution is quite recent, is it not?”

“Quite,” Mark answered, sadly. “I dare say, however, few will regret my departure!”

What a consummate rascal he was to be sure, Candice thought, bitterly, and he was acting dishonorably to the very last! She thought of the golden-haired girl she had twice seen with him, and wondered if he had tired of her already. The suspicion added a shade more of scorn to her voice as she answered:

"As people sow, so shall they reap, I believe, Mr. Maynard. Has your life been one that would cause people to regret your departure?"

"I see you have misjudged me," Mark answered, gloomily.

Candice wondered for just one second if it were possible she had misjudged him in the minutest degree.

Uncle Sam, hearing voices and recognizing Mark's deep, full tones, hurried into the room and grasped the hand extended to him warmly. What Mrs. Lee's welcome had lacked in cordiality Uncle Sam's made up for. He noted with deep regret the cloud on Mark's handsome face as Mrs. Lee slipped noiselessly from the room, but, fearing to wound by impertinent questions, listened quietly while Mark explained his plans for the future.

"Uncle," the nephew said, noting the old man's kindly gaze, "I believe you have liked and trusted me even when I most deserved your censure, but, ever since I lost my wife by my own foolishness, I have done nothing I need blush for! Do you believe me?"

“I do,” Uncle Sam answered, earnestly, “and I cannot see why some folks take such unaccountable prejudices!”

Mark knew he referred to Mrs. Lee, and was glad his uncle did not share her dislike of him.

“I’m getting to be an old man, Mark,” Uncle Sam said, regretfully; “you must not stay too long abroad, for I will need your help very soon perhaps.”

Mark dreaded this parting. It seemed to him as if those he loved most were always lost to him, and he knew he could not trust himself in Mrs. Lee’s presence again.

A cordial hand-shake, a promise of speedy news from the wanderer to be, and Mark was once more on his way homeward to Leta.

Meantime, Candice hurried to her own room and shut the door. She did not notice Katie sitting just inside the great bay-window, where the heavy curtains of rich, dark material fell about her, almost screening her from view. Baby Mark was sleeping sweetly in her arms, and, fearing to disturb him, she sat there

quietly, content to feel his curly head resting so confidently against her brawny arm. She was almost asleep herself when Candice came into the room, and was suddenly recalled to consciousness by the sound of suppressed weeping. Katie rose hastily from her chair and, depositing Mark on the bed, was in the act of leaving the room when Candice called her back.

“Don’t go, Katie ; I wish to speak with you.”

“Yes, mum,” Katie said, wonderingly, and then added, eagerly: “Can I do aught for you, Miss Candice?”

“No, Katie, but you have been my friend through many difficulties, and I am sure you will sympathize with me in this great trouble that has now come to me.” She then told Katie all about her suspicions regarding her husband, and how she had seen that fair girl and Mark together. “And yet,” she added, “he seems so true, Katie, I would fain forget it, if I could!”

“Don’t worrie so, Miss Candice,” Katie said, earnestly, stroking the tumbled curls of the

young girl-wife. "You'll get along well enough without him, my lassie! I wouldn't spoil my eyes by crying for the likes of him!"

"He is my husband, Katie!"

"I know it, Miss Candice!" and she added, mentally: "Bad 'cess to the decateful craythur!" Then, seeming to take a sudden interest in the subject, she asked, hurriedly: "Is he down-stairs yet, Miss Candice?"

"Yes," Candice answered; "he is with uncle;" and then she wondered why Katie left her and hurried from the room.

Mark was just making his adieux when a woman closely veiled stood waiting in the back hallway leading from the servants' quarters to the little side street.

"Where are you going, Katie?" the brisk chambermaid asked, wonderingly.

"None of your business, Miss Curiosity!" Katie said, sharply. The girl ran lightly upstairs, laughing at Katie's quick retort. As soon as the front door closed, Katie went out at the side entrance and came demurely around

in front of the house just in time to see Mark turn a corner a square distant. Then Katie hastened after him, never losing sight of him. Mark was wrapped in thought, for Mrs. Lee's conduct puzzled him, while it wounded his pride to be treated so scornfully. He walked away from the more pretentious dwellings to those of smaller size.

Katie was close behind him now; she saw him open the gate belonging to one of these dwellings and hurry up the graveled walk. A lady was sitting by the window. Katie trudged slowly by and gazed at her eagerly. Would she never turn her head? Yes! She had heard Mark's footsteps on the graveled walk and turned her head quickly, with a glad little gesture of welcome. Katie, with an exclamation of astonishment, stopped before the gate and gazed with all her heart in her eyes at the fair vision at the window.

"Do you wish anything, my good woman?" Mark asked, looking back at the silent figure at the gate. But Katie, with one backward glance, passed on, without giving him an answer.

She was in a perfect ecstasy of delight all the way home.

“Bless my soul!” she said, mentally, “all that worriting about the man’s own sister! Shure ’tis meself thought Miss Candice was mistaken! The poor darlint! to cry her eyes red over that!” and Katie laughed softly, although for some reason best known to herself her eyes were full of tears.

That evening, Katie astonished Candice by her unusual bursts of Irish wit, and she wondered why the girl looked at her so tenderly.

“What is the matter, Katie?” Candice asked at length, unable to account for the girl’s actions.

“Miss Candice,” Katie said, laughingly, “shure ’tis not right to cross the mountain till you get to it, and I fale light-hearted, that’s all!”

Candice never dreamed of the hidden meaning underlying the girl’s quaint remark. Katie feigned an errand in her room before retiring, and, waiting until she had disrobed, the kind-hearted girl tucked her in bed; then, bending over her, she left a kiss, and Candice fancied a tear also, upon her mistress’ fair young face.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AT THE OPERA.

THE next day was much the same to Candice as the preceding ones had been, only there seemed a shade more of melancholy in the very atmosphere. Uncle Sam noticed her listless looks, and strove to divert her thoughts from herself as much as possible.

“Candice, would you like to hear the opera to-night? I will engage seats if you care to go,” Uncle Sam said to her as he was rising from the dinner table.

“Would you like to go, uncle?”

“Certainly, my dear, but I don’t care about going alone.”

“Then I will go with you, uncle, so you can consider yourself my escort,” trying to speak laughingly. “I hope you will not get tired

of the task, for I know I'm a terrible nuisance sometimes!"

"I'll try and stand it," Uncle Sam answered, in a resigned tone, and with such a comical look of martyrdom on his face that Candice laughed a silvery peal of merriment.

The old gentleman, well pleased at his kindly efforts being appreciated, hastened from the house intent on purchasing seats for the evening's entertainment; he was hurrying along the street, looking neither to the right nor left, when a familiar voice called out his name. He turned quickly, and found himself face to face with Mark, who was laden with bundles of every size and description.

"Sorry I can't shake hands, uncle!" he said, laughing, "but you see how it is," with a look at his loaded arms.

"Well, great Scott! Mark, what are you going to do with all that rubbish? You look like a henpecked husband, trying to please your fickle lady's fancy by a variety of purchases!"

“Presents for mother and the girls,” Mark said, cheerfully. “I am going home to-morrow. I had intended going to-day, but business detained me.”

“Will you attend the opera to-night, Mark? I am just going after tickets for Can— Mrs. Lee and myself!” Uncle Sam said. “Thunder and lightning!” he added to himself, “I wonder if he noticed that slip?” But Mark paid no attention. He was thinking of the reception Mrs. Lee had given him the day before, and his lips twitched painfully at the unpleasant remembrance.

“Uncle,” Mark said, with an effort, “what is the reason Mrs. Lee despises me so thoroughly?”

“Does she despise you, my boy? I thought differently.”

Uncle Sam was honestly glad Mark had not noticed what he had said accidentally.

“Her dislike is plainly apparent,” Mark answered, “but after all I don’t know why I should care so very much, only one hates to be forever misunderstood.”

"She'll get over it, Mark; all women do!" Uncle Sam answered, knowingly. "I've found out they need a good deal of coaxing, and I suppose she is no exception to the general rule."

"I was fool enough to think her different from others," Mark said, bitterly.

"Confound it!" Uncle Sam thought, ruefully. "Why can't I tell the boy? I'd give a hundred dollars this minute if I felt free to do it, but I suppose I must leave it for him to find out for himself, if he ever does, which is very doubtful, the way Candice gives him the cold shoulder."

Mark changed the subject skilfully. After all, what was the use of talking over his troubles? It made them none the lighter to bear.

"How is that wonderful baby getting along up at your house, uncle?" Mark asked. "I haven't seen the little fellow for some time."

"Smart as a cricket, and looks more like his father every day of his life!"

"You knew his father then?" Mark asked, curiously. "I thought Mrs. Lee was a widow when she first came to you?"

“So she was, Mark, so she was ; but I’ve often seen her husband ; he was a pretty good fellow—a trifle cranky now and then, that was all !” and there was a mischievous gleam in the old gentleman’s eyes as he gazed at the stalwart young man beside him.

Why wouldn’t he understand ! Mark, walking beside him with a look of interest on his fine face, had no more idea his uncle meant him than he had of asking the next woman he met on the street to marry him, and so they separated.

“Would you like to go to the opera to-night, Leta ?” Mark asked the question while he was depositing his parcels on the table, preparatory to packing them in the trunk standing open ready to receive them.

“I don’t know that I care very much about it,” Leta replied, in an undecided tone of voice. “If we go, when shall I finish packing ?”

“I will help you, Leta. Yes, we will go.”

Mark could not have told why he preferred the opera to home that night ; but with all possible haste they finished their packing just as the supper bell rang.

"You must hurry, Leta," Mark said, when they rose from the table. "I give you just half an hour to make yourself pretty in, and I bet the whole sum of five cents you are not ready by that time!"

"I'll take the bet," Leta said, merrily, "and you'll see if I don't prove an exception to the general rule of womankind and be ready before my very precise brother!"

"Agreed."

Mark went hurriedly up to his room, threw his clothes on with what he thought was commendable haste and hurried down-stairs, but his sister was waiting for him in the hallway, daintily attired, with even her gloves and bonnet on, and looking provokingly cool.

"Here's your nickel!" Mark said, gravely extending her the coin; "take it as a memento of your great triumph over the rest of your sex, for who ever heard of a woman dressing in less than half an hour before!"

In a merry mood they started off, arm in arm. They were a trifle late, and the orchestra seats were all taken.

"Give me two in the balcony, then."

Mark was determined he would not return home without hearing the opera after all the trouble of getting there, so taking Leta's arm he hurried her up-stairs. They had secured front seats, which afforded them a good view of the stage and the entire audience. The prima donna commenced singing just as they entered the balcony.

Leta was toying idly with her opera glass, when a face attracted her attention, which she gazed at long and steadfastly. Presently she gave Mark a little nudge and whispered in his ear:

"Who is that lady with Uncle Sam? Is it the adventuress mother talks about?"

"It is Mrs. Lee," Mark said, quietly, scanning the vast audience beneath in search of the fairest face in the world to him. Yes, there they were at last, and taking the glass from Leta's hand he looked long and earnestly at the lovely face of the woman he loved.

"I wonder what she looks like without her

glasses!" he thought, noting the slender figure in a robe of black velvet, with great bunches of Parma pansies at throat and waist as her only ornament. She wore a white hat with a drooping plume, and beneath the brim pansies, nothing but pansies, suiting well the lovely, girlish face. But he did not note the pitiful droop of the red lips and the cheeks losing their freshest bloom, as if from sleepless nights or haunting day-dreams!

Leta took the glass when he offered it to her, and wondered why his hand trembled as it touched hers. Little did Candice dream Mark's eyes were on her constantly that entire evening, noting her every look, her every gesture, as she conversed with the white-haired old man by her side.

The last act was over, and great crowds of people were pushing their way down the flight of stairs.

"Don't hurry, Leta!" Mark said, laying his hand on her arm. "Wait until the crowd thins a trifle."

It happened that Mark, with Leta clinging to his arm, coming down the last step, met Uncle Sam and Mrs. Lee face to face.

Fearing explanations, he hurried Leta onward, but not before Candice had gazed full in her face and learned the truth. Ah! how miserably weak and blind she had been! The golden-haired girl was Leta Maynard! With her brain in a whirl, with a thousand conflicting emotions, Candice walked homeward by the side of Uncle Sam, scarcely heeding his criticisms on the music to which they had just been listening. What did she care for the opera now? Mark, her husband, was true to her in thought and deed! She had spurned him from her only yesterday, and he was proud and would not come to her again!

But what was Leta doing in the city, and why all this secrecy? Uncle Sam did not know of it she was sure, or he would have mentioned it to her. It was strange, but through it all she was happy, very happy over the discovery she had made.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"I WANT YOU! COME TO ME!"

"**K**ATIE! Oh! Katie! wake up! I have news, such wonderful news to tell you!" Candice called in the Irish girl's ear; Katie was dozing in an easy-chair by Baby Mark's bedside. But she did not stir. Candice took her by the shoulders and shook her gently.

Katie woke at last, and rubbed her eyes with amazement to see the radiant face bending over her; how much more was she astonished when Candice snatched her glasses from her eyes and threw them with a merry laugh into the far corner of the room, where they lay until the next day's sweeping brought them to light again.

Was her mistress going crazy? Katie wondered

uneasily, sleep vanishing from her eyes as if by magic. Candice was laughing at her as if divining her very thoughts.

“I’m not crazy, Katie, only happy; happier than I ever thought to be again!”

“In spite of the yaller-haired gurrel, Miss Candice?”

“Yes, in spite of ‘the yaller-haired girl,’ Katie!” Candice replied, joyously, “for she is Mark’s own sister!”

“I knowed it, Miss Candice, and said it was not best to cross the mountain till you cum to it!”

“And you never told me, Katie!” Candice said, reproachfully.

“I didn’t find time yet, Miss Candice. Shure I only followed him yisterday, and the likes of me couldn’t think of an aisy way to break it to you softly like. Thinks I to meself to-morrow will do; and now you’ve found out without poor Katie’s help!”

“You followed him, Katie?” Candice cried, as the servant paused for want of breath.

"I done just that, Miss Candice; I tarned detective for shure and followed him home and saw his yaller-haired gurrel at the window which wasn't his wife nor swateheart, but his own sister, who dominicked over you at Valley Farm so unmarcifully!"

"Domineered, you mean, Katie!" Candice corrected, and then a peal of laughter loud and long rang out over Katie's "tarning detective," startling little Mark from his slumbers, who threw the covers aside restlessly; then, sleep overpowering him once more, he closed his eyes and slumbered as soundly as ever. Candice arose and replaced the covering, then went over by the window and stood there looking out. Midnight hung over the city, but she could not sleep for very joyousness, and, turning to Katie, who was yawning terribly in spite of her efforts to appear wide awake, said, pleasantly: "Go to bed now, Katie, but come to me early in the morning, for I have an errand for you to do for me."

Katie obeyed, and, in less time than it takes to write it, was slumbering soundly, but Candice never closed her eyes the entire night; she could not sleep, and when morning dawned and Katie rapped at the door, her eyes grew round with astonishment at beholding Candice still in her opera dress of velvet, and with the Parma pansies drooping on her bosom.

"Oh! Miss Candice, how could you?" Katie said, reproachfully. "Why didn't you go to bed?"

"I could not sleep, Katie, and I am not tired in the least."

By her appearance Candice spoke the truth, for the listless look had entirely vanished from her face, never to return.

"What can I be afther doing for you, Miss Candice?" Katie asked, quickly. "You told me to come to you early in the morning."

"Take this to my husband's boarding-house, Katie," handing her a letter directed, "Mark Maynard, City." "Be sure you give it to Mr. Maynard himself, and wait for an answer."

“He’ll know me, shure, Miss Candice!”

“It makes no difference, Katie; tell him Uncle Sam employed you, tell him anything, only do not tell him Mrs. Lee and Candice are the same!”

So Katie went away quickly and had gone nearly a square, when she came back hurriedly and wanted to know what she should do with the “errant,” indicating the letter, if Mark Maynard was not at home.

“Bring it back to me, Katie; but hurry, for I cannot rest until I undo the wrong I have done him in my thoughts!”

Katie hurried so rapidly that her young mistress had just finished dressing when she came into the room, with a very red face and panting loudly, the letter still held tightly between her thumb and forefinger.

“He was not there?” Candice asked, with a quiver of disappointment in her voice.

“No, mum. Gone home to Valley Farm, the landlady sez. Sez she, ‘They’re gone, mum, bag and baggage, and are not coming back

agin. Now, what shall I do with the errant, Miss Candice?"

"Give it to me, Katie;" and taking the letter, Candice directed another envelope to Valley Farm Station, and putting a stamp on one corner handed it back to Katie, who was patiently waiting for orders.

"Take it to the post-office, Katie. Then that is all I can do but wait."

The letter contained only a few lines, and Candice could remember every word. It ran thus:

"MR. MARK MAYNARD: Since meeting you last I have made a discovery, and have a long explanation to make to you. I want you! Come to me! MRS. LEE."

What would he think! Doubtless that she was very imprudent; but would he come? Would he give up his arrangements for going abroad and come to her? Two days of dreary waiting! Would the time never, never pass!

And suppose he did not come! Would it not punish her justly for her doubts of him?

Meantime at the farm all was commotion, and in the joy of having her loved ones at home with her once more Mrs. Maynard had grown comparatively young again. She gazed at Mark, and then at Leta, as if afraid it was not reality.

Not one word was said to wound Leta's feelings, and not the slightest explanation was required of her, so she resumed her old place naturally enough among them again. Mrs. Maynard took her in her arms and, kissing her, said, lovingly:

"Leta, child, I have missed you terribly! Thank God! you are at home once more!"

Leta wept on her shoulder. She knew the words had been spoken from a heart chastened by sorrow, and she kissed her mother affectionately.

Mark was down at the station the next day; he had a commission from his sister Alice to one of the dry-goods stores, and more from the force

of habit than aught else entered the tiny post-office and inquired for the Maynard mail. He was not expecting anything, and thinking the letter handed him was for his mother or Alice, he put it in his coat pocket and never thought of it again until he returned home and pulled it out of his pocket along with the parcels he had just purchased.

"I had almost forgotten," Mark said, carelessly; "here is a letter for one of you."

His mother took it from him quickly; letters were a rarity at Valley Farm, and she wondered who had taken the trouble to write to them. Glancing at the envelope she noted the epistle was for Mark, who had not even looked at the name written on it.

"Why, Mark, it's for you!" his mother said, in astonishment. "I hope it is not a business letter that will call you away from home; but that is scarcely likely, for the writing is in a delicate female hand."

"For me?" Mark asked, wonderingly, and his first thought was of Candice. Taking the note

from the envelope he read the few lines hurriedly. "I want you! Come to me!" stood out before all the rest, and then the name, "Mrs. Lee!" What did it mean? Why had she written to him to come to her? His mother gazed at him anxiously.

"Is it bad news, Mark?" she asked, tremulously.

"No, mother, not bad news; only I must go back to Chicago by the next train!"

"What is it, Mark?" Leta asked, timidly.

"I cannot tell you, sister, for I do not know myself."

Although he put the family off with a careless answer, he wondered over the strangeness of Mrs. Lee's request. That she regretted her conduct toward him he saw fully, but why she should care to send for him directly after his return home was a subject of the wildest conjecture to him.

Mark was in a fever of impatience, even when journeying toward the woman who had humbled herself enough to send for him, for that one so

haughty and proud as Mrs. Lee could forget her fancied injuries and make apologies was very far from his imagination. That one so proud could plead to him for forgiveness he could not think; but something had happened; she needed him and he would go to her!

CHAPTER XXX.

"YOU ARE MY WIFE!"

CANDICE impatiently awaited Mark's arrival, for her most anxious forebodings could not turn her from the thought that he would certainly answer her appeal. She pictured his astonishment when her letter should be received; he had loved her she was sure; but supposing her conduct had killed that love, then she must bid farewell to all hope of a reconciliation.

The third day came. "He will surely be here this evening," she thought, with a thrill of expectation, and calling Katie into the library, as she was passing the open door, she said:

"Katie, I wish to speak with you."

"All right, Miss Candice," and dropping the dust-pan and brush she was carrying outside the door, the Irish girl entered the room.

"Shut the door, Katie!" and Katie obeyed.

"Now, Katie," Candice said, with a lovely wild rose blush dyeing her delicate cheeks, "I will tell you what I want of you. I am expecting Mr. Maynard on the seven o'clock train. I want you to keep watch, and, if he comes, answer the bell yourself and conduct him here as quietly as possible. Wait, Katie!" as the girl started to leave the room. "It is three-quarters of an hour to the time; go and get Baby Mark and bring him here."

With a knowing shake of her fiery head, Katie left the room and soon returned with Mark in her arms.

"Put him down, Katie," Candice said, quickly; "he is too heavy for you to carry."

"Shure is it heavy he is? I don't avin fale the weight of him, and I want to think he's Katie's little man for yet a little while longer."

"Katie," Candice said, earnestly, "whatever happens, you shall never be separated from Baby Mark, unless of your own free will."

With grateful tears in her eyes, Katie left the room to take up her watch in the hallway.

Candice kissed her little boy passionately. “Baby Mark,” she said, laying her cheek close to his velvet one, “you and I are going to be so happy if papa comes!”

But the child had discovered some blocks and badly used toys of his, and slipping from his mother’s arms ran after them with gleeful laughter, and was soon lost in building wonderful houses out of them.

Katie, in the hallway, was waiting the issue of events as anxiously as her young mistress.

The pert chambermaid had noticed her loitering in the hall, and asked her if she was expecting her Mickey by the front way, and Katie had glared at her scornfully in reply; but in a few minutes she heard a hack rattling along the street, and with a flourish of the whip the driver reined up to the sidewalk. Katie saw it all—the hackman opening the door and the handsome blonde young man stepping from the carriage, with an eager look on his face.

A ring at the bell, and Katie, with a look of perfect innocence on her florid face, opened the door quickly.

Mark noticed their old servant with astonishment, but Katie gave him no time for questions in regard to herself; she hurried him along the hall and opened the library door, which he entered.

Baby Mark, sitting before the open grate, building miniature houses, looked up at his entrance and then quietly resumed his play; Mark glanced beyond the baby form at a slender, girlish figure in navy blue cashmere; her back was turned toward him, and she seemed intently examining the titles of the tiers of books piled high above her head; she was striving to obtain composure.

"You sent for me, Mrs. Lee!" It was Mark's voice. She turned toward him and came across the room with hesitating steps.

Her eyes, which had always been hidden from his sight heretofore, were gazing at him eagerly with a world of love and entreaty in their lovely wine-brown depths.

“Mark,” she said, timidly, “do you not know me, or have you forgotten your Candice?”

Could this be true? Was this his young girl-wife standing before him, alive and well?

“Do not mock me!” he said, hoarsely. “Who are you that so strangely resemble the young girl-wife I lost from out my life?”

“Mark, my husband, do you not know me? I am Candice! Will you take me back to your heart, my darling?”

Now her arms were about his neck and he was raining hot, ardent kisses on her lovely upturned face.

“My darling! oh! my darling!” he murmured, passionately. “Thank God! I have found you at last! You are my wife!”

Neither noticed the door of the library open and Uncle Sam look in, and then, with the not very elegant remark, “Thunder!” beat a hasty retreat back into the old hall, where Katie vowed she found him “dancin’ like an owld fool and lackin’ avin the since of one!”

Baby Mark, sitting contentedly on the floor for

some time, got tired of seeing so much affection wasted and he not the direct cause of it; he commenced crying lustily, and then Candice went to him and, taking him in her arms, said, with the light of perfect happiness on her face:

"Mark, see our boy!"

Mark gazed at them like one dazed and, strong man that he was, burst into tears!

"Oh! Candice!" he said, remorsefully, "if I had only known! How much you have suffered! Oh! my darling!" and he gathered the slender figure, baby and all, in his strong young arms and held them there as if he could never let them go.

"I had almost forgotten, Mark," Candice said, roguishly; "I believe you love Mrs. Lee! Shall I send her to you?"

But he answered, joyfully: "I am content to let well enough alone, and, much as I imagined I loved the late Mrs. Lee, I love the present Mrs. Maynard a thousand times better!"

Uncle Sam waited impatiently for their reappearance from the library. At last curiosity

got the better of caution, and he peered into the room, but they were so busy they did not notice him. Candice was telling her story after her wild flight, and Mark was listening sadly; each word was like a stab in his throbbing heart. Baby Mark saw the old man's face and shouted, joyfully:

“Dere's my pitty papa! I want to do to him!”

Mark and Candice saw Uncle Sam, called him in, and explanations were made all around. Mark spoke tenderly of Leta, and told how he had striven to shield her.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"FORGIVE ME, CANDICE, MY CHILD!"

MARK and Candice could scarcely realize that all their miserable doubts and sorrows were at an end. Mark gazed at her in amazement sometimes, wondering if it were really true and not some sweet, illusive dream that his young girl-wife was found at last!

The long curls of auburn hue were brought from their hiding-place where Katie had laid them carefully away, and Mark kissed each shining tress when he heard that the head they once crowned had been so near being laid forever out of sight beneath the grass and tufted daisies.

Mark thought sadly of his mother, waiting for his return home, and asked his young wife if she could ever forgive her. "Let your ten-

der heart plead for her," he said, "for she has repented bitterly of her treatment of you, and go home with me to Valley Farm."

"Yes, Mark," she replied, "I will go home with you!" and he thanked her with a kiss.

Nearly four years had elapsed since the opening of this story, and it was almost summer-time again. The trees were green with spring's latest verdure, and the air odorous with the perfume of many sweet-scented flowers, when Mark, Candice and the baby descended from the train and wended their way along the old familiar path.

Little Mark was tired and his father took him in his arms and carried him tenderly. When they came to the shore of "Fairy Lake," Mark said, huskily:

"Candice, in all my life I hope I may never again suffer as I did when I found your tiny rubber in the mire at the water's edge! For a time I thought I should go mad!"

"But all our troubles are over now, my husband! We must try to forget the past, and live only for the future!"

Mark had not told his mother when he was coming home, or of the reconciliation that had taken place since he left her. When she saw them coming up the walk, she gazed at them in wonder. It was Mark, there could be no doubt of that, but who was the slender figure in gray, walking beside him so proudly? And could it be possible that what she had thought was a huge bundle Mark was carrying so carefully was a baby?

"Girls," she said, quickly, with a good deal of her old imperiousness, "who is that woman with Mark?"

The girls looked from the window eagerly, but did not recognize his companion. She must be some visitor from the city, they thought regretfully, for they hated to have their quiet disturbed so soon. Oh! if Mark had only come alone!

Mrs. Maynard turned toward her son expectantly when he entered the room, and waited till he came up to her, the baby still in his arms and Candice by his side.

She gazed at them so steadily, with such a

look of incredulous bewilderment, that Mark, pitying her, said:

“Mother, have you no welcome for my wife and baby?”

Candice, with her tender eyes humid with tears, came quickly forward, saying, gently:

“Do you not know me, Aunt Kezia—mother?”

“Can it be Candice?” exclaimed Mrs. Maynard. “Oh! Father in Heaven! Thou hast been kind to me, a sinner!” The haughty woman, flinging her arms about the slight figure of Candice, said, humbly: “Forgive me, my child!”

The girls came forward and the reconciliation was complete. Baby Mark was almost smothered with kisses, and altogether it was a joyous homecoming.

Little Mark carried all hearts by storm, and evoked peals of merriment whenever he addressed Mrs. Maynard as “Dammuzzer.” In his childish bewilderment he looked from face to face, wondering what they were all laughing about.

The past was ignored as much as possible,

and a couple of months went by quite pleasantly. On Leta's account Mark and Candice then made preparations to go abroad.

As much as Mrs. Maynard and Alice dreaded to see them go, they knew that it was best and uttered not one single protest.

Katie was to go with them as nurse to little Mark.

One evening they were all surprised and delighted when Uncle Sam walked in unexpectedly. When their plans were unfolded to him, he said, with a good deal of curiosity, turning to his sister:

"And you're going to stay on the farm alone, Kezia? Mighty lonesome you'll get!"

"Alice will be with me," Mrs. Maynard answered, resignedly; "I will have to be contented. There is no other way."

"But great Scott! Kezia, what do you suppose I am going to do while the children are gone? I reckon I'll be obliged to marry Mrs. Chamberlain, unless you'll consent to come and live with me!"

“Brother, do you mean it?” Mrs. Maynard said, anxiously, “for if you really want me, I will come.”

“And Alice shall go with us,” Mark said, quickly; “surely nothing could be better for us all than this arrangement!”

The old farm-house was to be closed during their absence, and when they returned it was to be remodeled throughout, and Mark and Candice would make their future home there.

CHAPTER XXXII.

FINALE.

KATIE was delighted at the prospect of going abroad, and on their return to town kept them all in an uproar of merriment by her quaint remarks. The kind-hearted girl who had always taken so much care of Candice was appreciated at last by every member of the Maynard family.

“I hate to lave brother Pat,” Katie said, a trifle regretfully, “but I’ll stick to Miss Candice shure!” and Candice astonished her very much by leaving a tender kiss on her florid cheek.

Katie would not wash her cheek for days afterwards for fear of destroying the kiss, and she was very grateful when Candice gave her a check for a thousand dollars to give to her brother Pat as a testimonial of her remembrance of their kindness to her in her dire need.

The trip to Europe was a success. In France they found proof that Leta was indeed the heir of an almost princely inheritance left by the man who, not daring to claim it himself, had paved the way for his young wife's future happiness, surrounded by wealth and all that it could bring.

Two years they spent abroad, and Leta, who had been much admired as the fair young widow of Count Lucerne, concluded to remain in France as the wife of a nobleman of ancient lineage; he had been attracted by the youthful American's blonde loveliness, and even her sad history did not deter him from making her his wife.

Mark and Candice, Alice, Katie and little Mark bade farewell to foreign lands, and with light hearts sailed across the ocean toward home and the dear ones left behind. They parted from Leta with many tears and kisses, but her husband promised to bring her to America soon, and with that promise they were forced to be content.

A year later Katie was married to a "foine" young man, fresh from the Emerald Isle, and was set up in housekeeping in the latest style by Candice and Mark. She laughingly declared

that she was a "foine" lady now, thanks to her "wee man," for Candice had told her her good fortune was all a present from little Mark.



Mrs. Maynard and Uncle Sam seem very well satisfied in spending their time alternately in the city and at Valley Farm. The old farm-house has been remodeled, and is now a very fashionable-looking mansion of the period.

It is rumored among the circle of busybodies about the Station that Alice is soon to be married. Of course, Mrs. Levy knows all about it, and it is certain that a young man from the Queen City manages to pay Valley Farm a visit whenever Alice honors it with her presence.

Mrs. Maynard speaks lovingly of her daughter Candice; still the family will never forget how near shipwreck her life had been, but the life-boat had managed to live through the storm, and happiness reigned in their hearts at last!

THE END.

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
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